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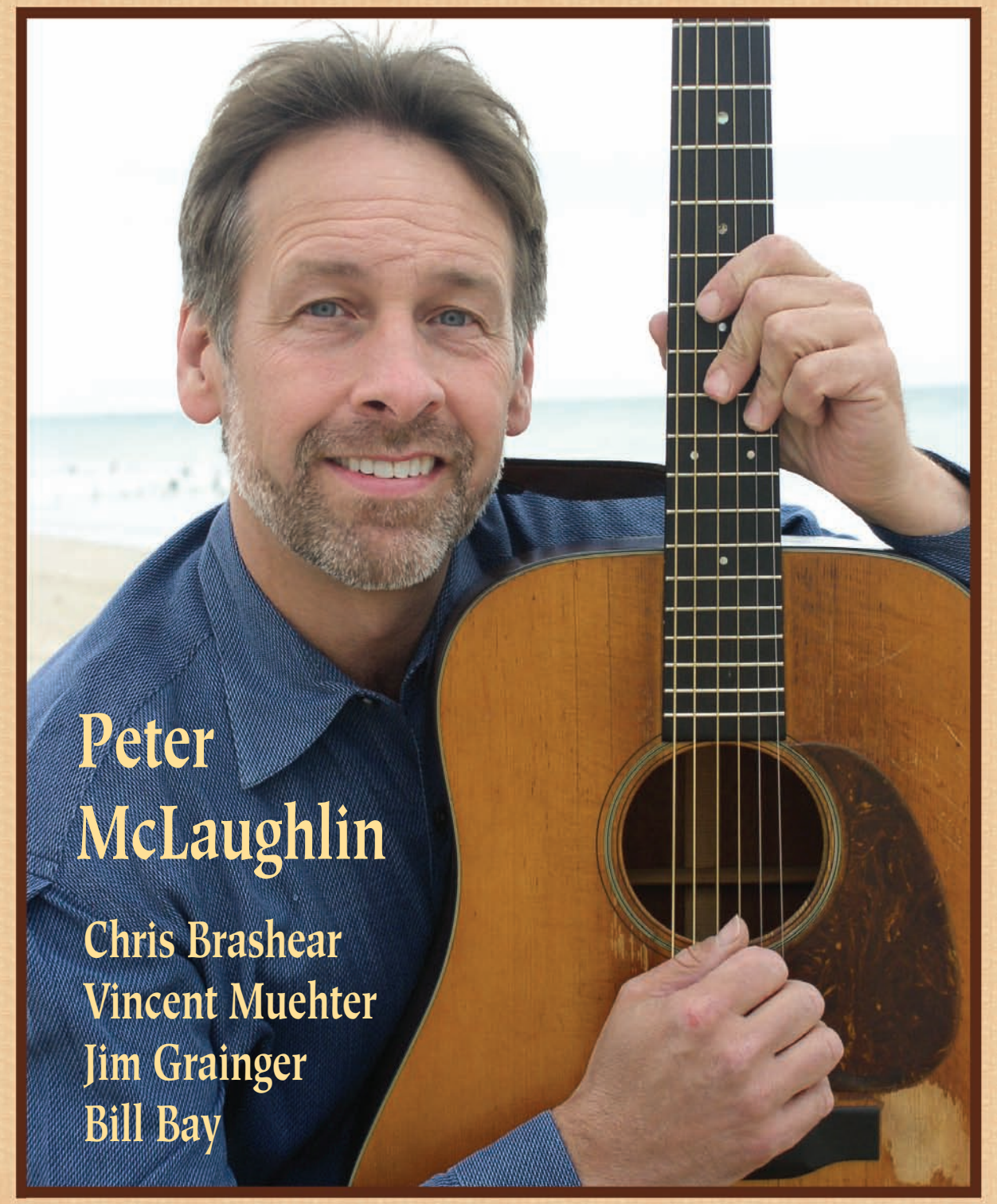
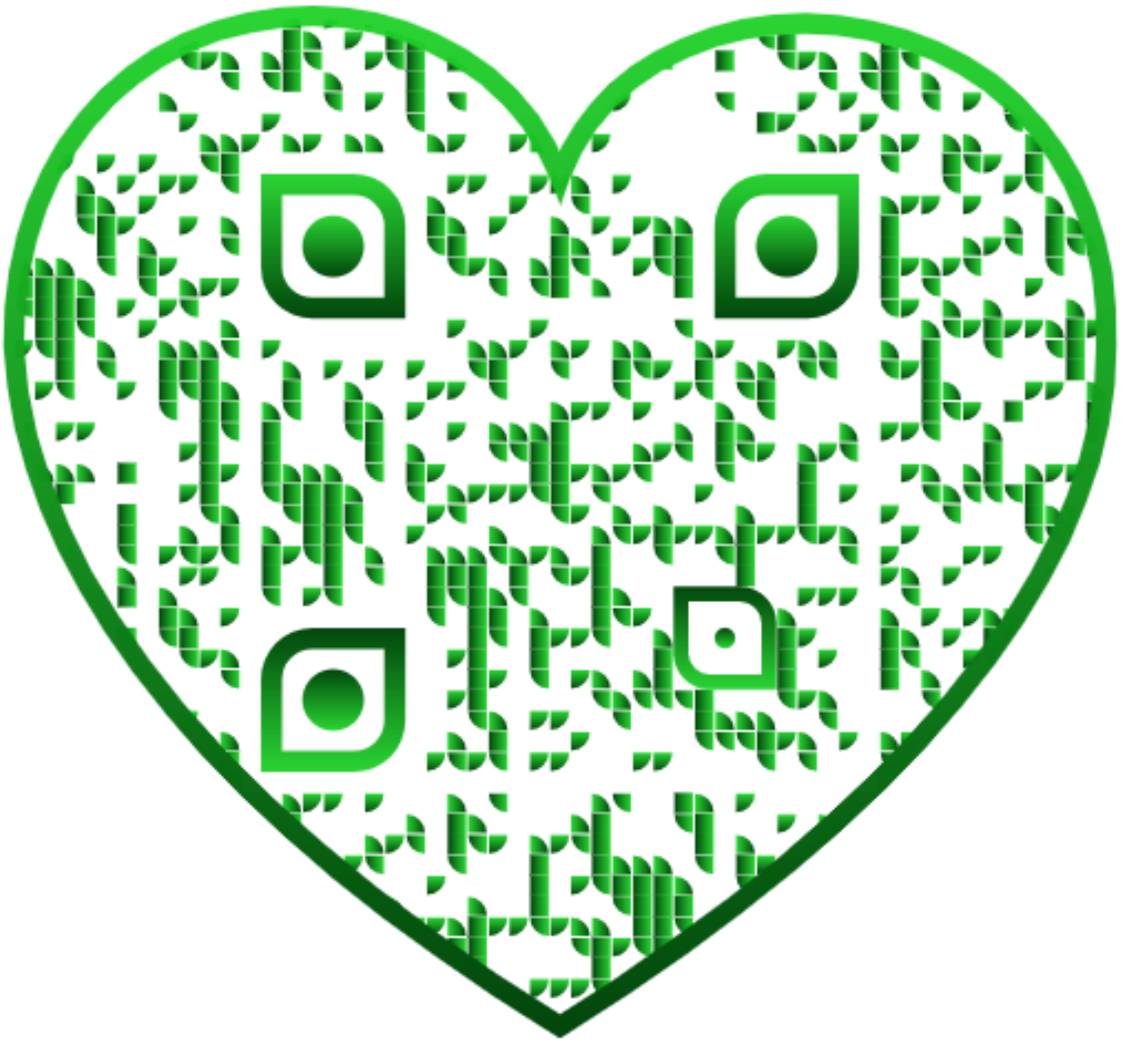
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

Volume 8, Number 2 January/February 2004





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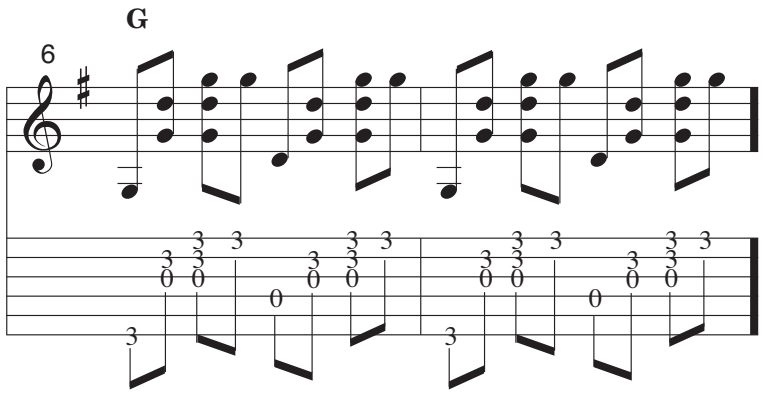
EDITOR'S PAGE

Corrections

There were a few things that were printed in the last issue that need to be corrected. In Steve Pottier's column (page 63) Example 3 should have looked like this:

Example 3



In Joe Carr's column (13), the first line of the second version of "Gold Rush" reads: **GGGE** it should read **GGGD**.

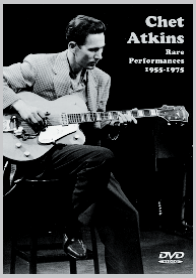
Sorry about those errors!

Congratulations

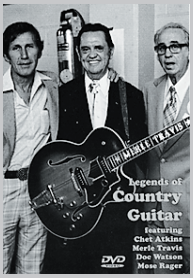
You will notice that several of our regular columnists are not present in this issue—John Tindel, Dan Crary, Chris Jones & Steve Pottier. It is a busy time of year and each had other various obligations. However, we would like to announce that the reason Steve Pottier was not available to contribute to this issue was due to the birth of his son, Evan Miles Pottier on November 4th. Congratulations Steve!

Flatpicking 2003

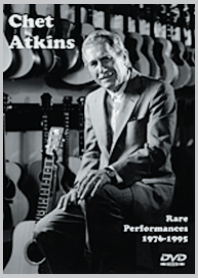
A lot of subscribers have asked about our yearly sampler. We are in the process of completing that now and it should be available sometime in January. Some of our other projects have put us behind on the sampler, but we still intend to put it out. Stay tuned!



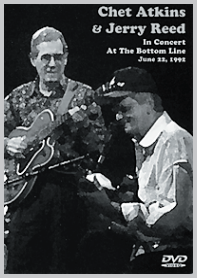
Chet Atkins
Rare Performances 1955-1975
Vestapol 13027 $24.95



Legends of Country Guitar
Atkins/Travis/Rager/Watson
Vestapol 13070 $24.95



Chet Atkins
Rare Performances 1975-1995
Vestapol 13091 $24.95



Chet Atkins & Jerry Reed
At the Bottom Line, 1992
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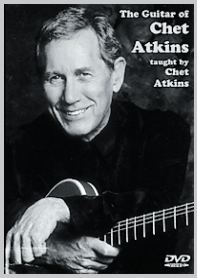

The Guitar of Chet Atkins
Taught by Chet Atkins
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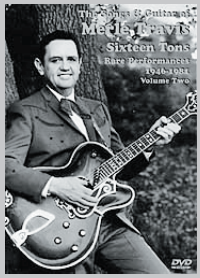

Merle Travis
Sixteen Tons 1946-1981
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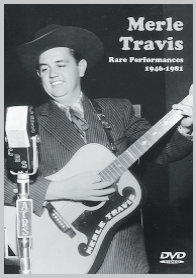
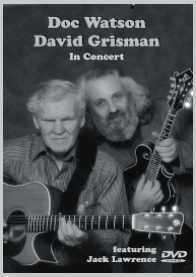


Merle Travis
Rare Performances 1946-1981
Vestapol 13012 $24.95



Doc Watson & David Grisman
In Concert
Vestapol 13082 $24.95

Doc's Guitar Jam
Watson/Rice/Crary/Kaufman
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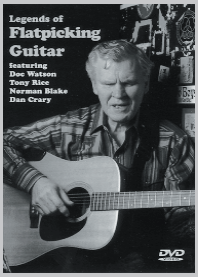
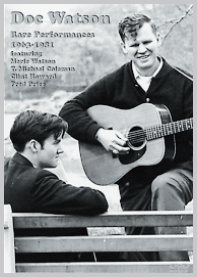
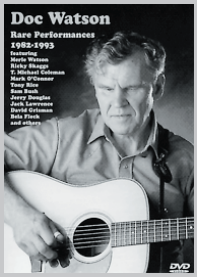


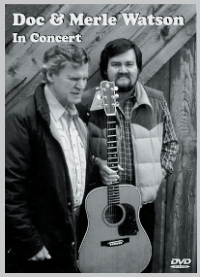
Legends of Flatpicking Guitar
Watson/Rice/Blake/Crary
Vestapol 13005 $24.95



Doc Watson
Rare Performances 1962-1981
Vestapol 13023 $24.95



Doc Watson
Rare Performances 1982-1993
Vestapol 13024 $24.95



Doc & Merle Watson
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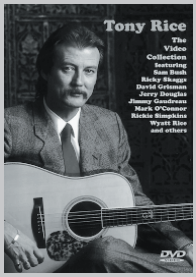

Tony Rice
The Video Collection
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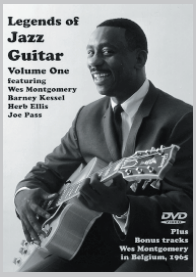

Legends of Jazz Guitar #1
Montgomery/Pass/Kessel...
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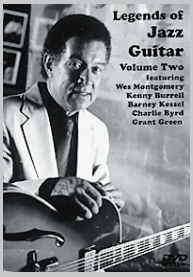

Legends of Jazz Guitar #2
Montgomery/Burrell...
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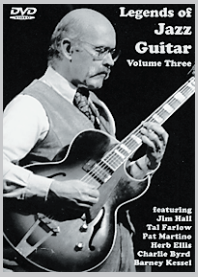
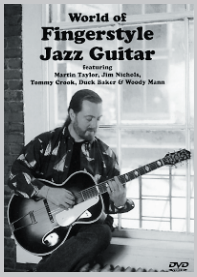


Legends of Jazz Guitar #3
Hall/Farlow/Martino...
Vestapol 13043 $24.95

Barney Kessel
Rare Performances 1962-1991
Vestapol 13013 $24.95



World of
Fingerstyle Jazz Guitar
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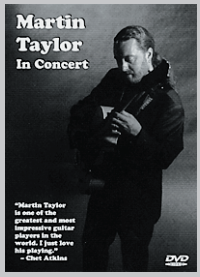

Martin Taylor
In Concert
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Byrd/Ellis/Farlow
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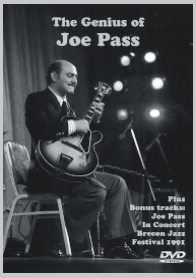

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Rare Performances 1962-1982
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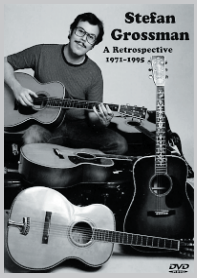

Stefan Grossman
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John Renbourn
Rare Performances 1965-1995
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Celtic Fingerstyle Guitar
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Recordings 1966-1993
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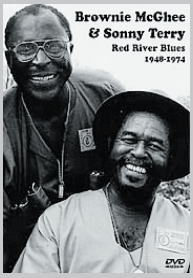

Brownie McGhee
& Sonny Terry 1948-1974
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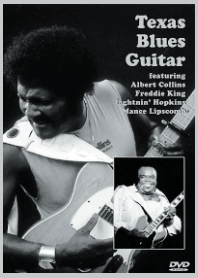

Texas Blues Guitar
Albert Collins, Freddie King...
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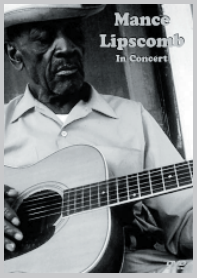
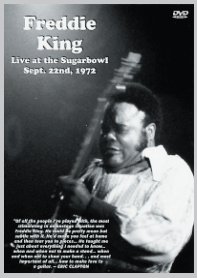


Mance Lipscomb
In Concert
Vestapol 13011 $24.95



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Peter McLaughlin

Photo: Mary Noble Ours

Peter McLaughlin (left) with his musical partner Chris Brashear

The first issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* was published just over seven years ago. In that issue we featured a brand new CD, *Cliffs of Vermilion* from flatpicker extraordinaire Peter McLaughlin. At the time of that release, which was Peter's first and only solo project, he had been the lead guitar player for Laurie Lewis & Grant Street for about six years, touring internationally with Laurie and playing at many of this country's top bluegrass events. The recording was a great success and to this day stands as one of the finest flatpicking recordings ever produced, with Peter's playing continuing to inspire bluegrass guitarists nationwide.

Despite the success of the solo recording and his spot as the lead guitar player in one of the country's leading bluegrass bands, Peter, a father of three, left the national music scene in 1997 to focus on his family and his career (Peter has degrees in Geology and Hydrology and currently works for the City of Tucson as a Senior Planner). For several years Peter played music closer to his home in Tucson, Arizona, but was noticeably absent from the national scene. That all changed in 2000 when Peter's new band, Perfect Strangers was formed and began touring the country. In 2003 the release of the band's first recording (*Perfect Strangers*) with Rebel Records sparked an even greater motivation for the band to continue touring. Additionally, only a few months after that project hit the streets, Copper Creek Records released Peter's duo project (*Canyoneers*) with his long-time musical collaborator and touring partner, Chris Brashear.

Written by Dan Miller

Having actively played lead guitar in bluegrass bands since the mid-1970s, Peter (at 48 years of age) can be considered one of the second generation flatpickers who took what Doc, Tony, Norman, Dan, and Clarence did before him and built upon it to help shape the role of the lead guitar in

bluegrass. Along with some of his noteworthy contemporaries—like Russ Barenberg, Charles Sawtelle, Scott Nygaard, and Phil Rosenthal—Peter helped bring a new and exciting voice to the acoustic guitar in an era that was littered with Doc, Tony, Dan, and Norman "clones." His strong and tasteful solos and powerful rhythm work have inspired many of today's best West Coast flatpickers.

Dale Adkins, one of today's top flatpickers in the Northwestern part of the country, says, "When I first heard Peter, what stuck out to me was that he was a significant melody player, yet he would play out of chord positions and allow notes to ring in a way that was very full and complete. His playing is not about flash. What I learned from him was that it was OK to play the melody. It doesn't have to be a flashy break to sound good. Also, the power and attack of his rhythm is astounding. He understands traditional bluegrass and is rooted in tradition. He has really studied rhythm guys like Jimmy Martin and Lester Flatt. He knows the role of the guitar in the band and is able to appropriately move the band because of that. With Peter in the band it sounds like it is supposed to sound!"

California's Jim Nunally said, "Peter is another of the fine guitarists you don't get to hear enough of. His work with Laurie Lewis and Tom Rozum brought him to notoriety. I have worked with Peter at Bluegrass at the Beach in Oregon and on the *New Standards* CD. I'm impressed with his musical sensibility. He is a supportive musician and a real band player. He has a lovely tone and the skill to support it. I listened to him one evening at music camp sitting and play fingerstyle guitar, mostly jazz stuff, it was great! He's a fun fellow to hang with too."

John Lowell, lead guitar player for the band Kane's River, said, "I'm fortunate because I ended up going to the same college as Peter. For 4 (or was it 5?) years we played music together in dorm rooms and apartment living rooms. He never seemed to get tired of my habit of stopping him in mid-tune to have him show me some cool thing he had just done on the guitar. To this day, a good chunk of what I play can somehow be traced back to those days in Flagstaff with Peter. I not only ended up with a guitar mentor, but also a life long friend."

Peter's current duo partner, Chris Brashear, says, "Peter is a powerful player who always surprises me with the ideas he comes up with within his improvisation. It is always fun to play with someone like that. He is a tasteful and complementary player and his rhythm playing is very powerful in the band. There seems to be no limits on what he can do."

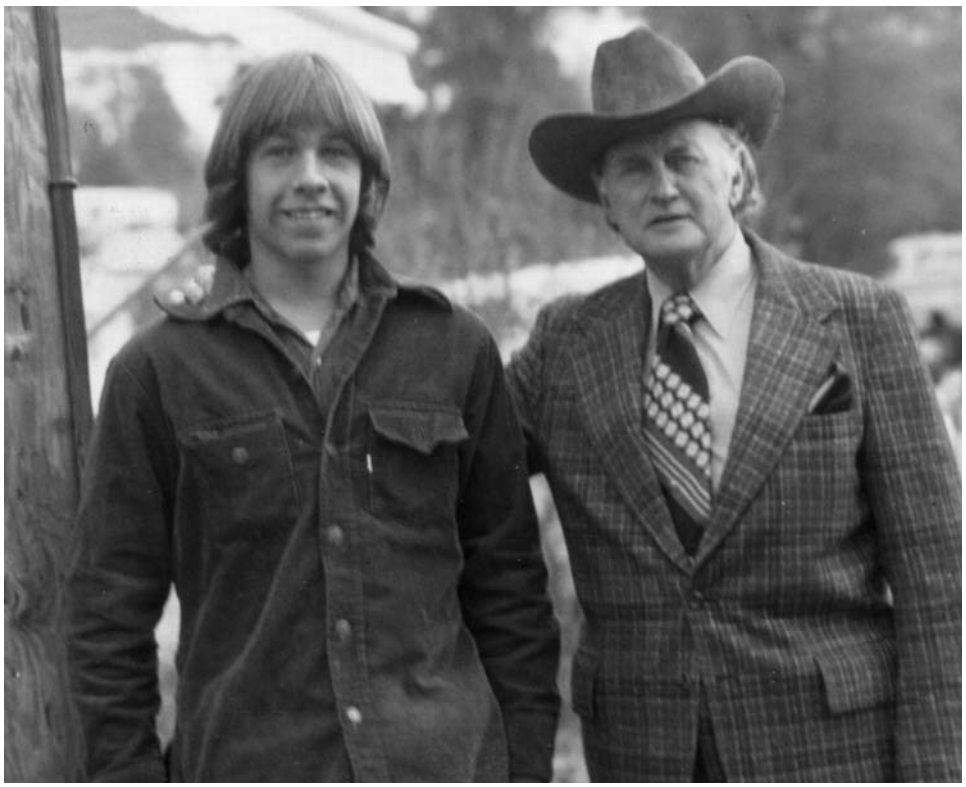
Peter McLaughlin grew up in Washington, D.C. His mother played the piano and his father played the guitar in the old Carter Family style. Peter wanted to learn both. He started piano lessons at age 7 and picked up the guitar at age 8. In 1964, when he was nine years old, his mother and father took him to the Smithsonian to see Doc Watson. Peter remembers, "I was awestruck at the way Doc could make the guitar sound like a fiddle. He was my first influence on guitar."

Peter's parents were music enthusiasts and loved bluegrass music. When Peter and his younger brother David (noted mandolin player for the Johnson Mountain Boys and the Lynn Morris Band) were young, their parents frequently took them to bluegrass shows and festivals. In addition to attending shows in the Washington, D.C. area, the family traveled to festivals in Galax, Virginia; to Union Grove, North Carolina; and to Opry houses in West Virginia. Peter remembers seeing the Stanley Brothers, Bill Monroe, Doc Watson, the Country Gentleman, the Seldom Scene, and many other popular bands of the time.

Although Peter was primarily interested in bluegrass music while he was growing up, he says he loved all styles of music and was a big Beatles fan. Between the ages of 10 and 12 he took classical guitar lessons as his parents felt it would help make him "well rounded". When he was eleven he took several lessons with the famous fingerstyle jazz and classical guitarist Charlie Byrd. Regarding his classical guitar experience Peter said that he learned how to read music on the guitar and although he doesn't play that style very much anymore, he has carried over some of the things he learned to his flatpicking.

During his high school years. Peter's after-dinner time was spent playing music with his family. His mother played bass, his brother played mandolin and fiddle, his dad played the guitar, and Peter played the guitar and banjo. Although the family would occasionally play at parties and square dances, the majority of the time they simply played in the living room at home. Peter said, "Having spent my formative years playing with my family led up to a nice professional career."

Peter says that his learning process on guitar during his early years mainly consisted of listening to records and going to live shows and watching people. He recom-



Peter McLaughlin with Bill Monroe, Payson, Arizona, November 1974

Peter with the Flagstaff, Arizona, based band Flying South. Frank Dedera (banjo), Peter McLaughlin (guitar), Roger Smith (bass), Tom Rozum (mandolin), John Zarske (guitar)

mends that guitar students be familiar with the classic recordings of bluegrass in order to "get the feel" of bluegrass music. He stated that playing with other people was also very important. In addition to playing with his musical family, Peter also had the opportunity to pick with musicians at the festivals he attended. On one occasion, when he was only about 14, he even got the chance to pick a few tunes with Doc Watson, his first inspiration on guitar. Peter said that other early influences included Clarence White and Russ Barenberg.

In 1970 Peter's family moved to Denmark for two years. There he met and played music with another American, jazz guitarist Mike Wollenberg. In 1974 he moved to Flagstaff, Arizona, to attend Northern Arizona University. In 1977 he took a semester off and went to visit his old friend Mike Wollenberg, who was living in Berkeley, California. While in California Peter met Tony Rice and took lessons from Tony during his stay there. He said that Tony taught him some technique things and showed him a few tunes. Peter remembers liking Tony's solo to "Temperance Reel" and he asked Tony to teach that to him. He said Tony also shared some of the Dawg music he was playing at the time, like his solo on "EMD".

When he returned to Arizona in the fall of 1977, Peter joined his first professional bluegrass band, Flying South. The original band consisted of Frank Dedera on banjo, Roger Smith on bass, Peter on guitar, Tom Rozum on mandolin, and John Zarske on second guitar. The band played mostly bluegrass and swing music and produced a couple of albums during Peter's tenure. Peter performed steadily with Flying South until he moved from Flagstaff to Tucson in 1983 to attend graduate school. However, he continued to keep the band together and Flying South regrouped with Kirby Mittelmeier on mandolin and John Willis on bass. They performed periodically throughout the 1980s and 90s, touring throughout the Southwest and Mexico for the Arizona Commission on the Arts. After he first moved to Tucson he also played with a "Western-influenced" bluegrass band, the Titan Valley Warheads, winners of the Telluride Bluegrass Band contest in 1988, and with Bob Meighan, Earl Edmonson, and Kirby Mittelmeier, winners of that competition in 1991.

Although Peter has spent his entire musical career as a band player and has never really been known as a contest player, he did spend several years during the mid-1980s traveling to Winfield, Kansas, to compete in the National Flatpicking Guitar Championship. Peter said that the first time he went to Winfield was in the late 1970s and he had such a good time picking that he went back in 1983 and entered the contest. In 1985 he returned and made the top five. In 1986 he placed second. He competed again in 1987 and did not make the top five, but in 1988 finally won the championship. He returned once again to Winfield in 1989 "just to have fun." He looks back on all of his trips to Winfield with fond memories. He says, "I met some great people and it was always an experience going there and getting to play guitar with people like Robin Kessinger, Ron Block, Robert Shafer, Mike Bubb, Gary Cook, Steve Kaufman, Mike Maddux, Dave Peters, and others. I would recommend to anyone who is a guitar player that they go to Winfield. I tell all my students to go, whether to compete or not."

In 1991 Peter got a call from his old Flying South band mate Tom Rozum, who had moved to Berkeley, California and was playing in Laurie Lewis' band. Scott Nygaard had left the Lewis band and Peter was recruited to fill the vacant spot. He toured and recorded with Laurie from 1991 through 1997. Regarding his time with Laurie's band he says, "Laurie was great to work for. She is such a pro. She has got the right way of putting soul and feeling into a song." During his time with Laurie's band Peter was able to pass on his guitar expertise to many workshop participants at popular bluegrass workshop events such as Bluegrass at the Beach on the Oregon coast, the Augusta Heritage Festival in Elkins, West Virginia, and Colorado's Rockygrass Academy and the Telluride Academy. He has also taught private lessons for many years.

When asked how he approaches the teaching process, Peter said that he likes to talk to students a lot about finding song melodies by ear. He encourages them to first find the simple melody and learn the song close to that melody as a basis. After his students have spent quite a bit of time playing a song close to the melody, he will then teach them how to create variations. He says that unless the student's ability to play the melody is very strong they can be thrown off when trying to improvise. He asks students not to move away from the melody too quickly. When learning new songs himself, Peter says that he will first play it as simply as he can before he takes it in new directions.

Regarding technique, Peter likes to tell students "Everyone has their own approach. If it works for you, do it!" Unless the student is doing something totally out of the realm of flatpicking, he will allow them to try it. He tells them, "Learn by watching people and experiment with different techniques. Then do the things that work for you."

Peter also encourages students to listen to the people who bring a lot of heart, soul, and feeling to bluegrass. He says, "Listen to the early versions of the old bands for that feeling. Be familiar with the classic recordings of bluegrass to get the feel of bluegrass music."

When attacking the strings, Peter uses the rounded shoulder—rather than the point—of a standard teardrop-shaped pick.

He feels that this produces a better tone. He also likes to get as much sound as possible out of the guitar by allowing the strings to ring. He accomplishes this by playing out of chord shapes and leaving the fingers down as much as possible. Regarding good tone, he says, "Attack the strings with strength and confidence and let the notes ring out."

Peter is also a firm believer in working to achieve an economy of motion in both the right and left hands. In order to accomplish this, he asks his students to watch themselves play in a mirror while practicing at home. He says, "Most players are not aware of the way their hands are moving. It helps to watch and see what is going on from out front."

Although Peter will use tablature when teaching, he says that he asks his students to break away from the tablature as soon as possible after learning a tune. He says, "If you have to rely on the tab, it makes in more difficult to learn. Your ear needs to learn those notes. Learn from the tab, but then put it away and learn to play it a slightly different way. Tab can become a handicap. Train your ear to learn the melodies." When working with students, Peter will show variations that are close to the melody, but different from the tab. One exercise he uses to help students accomplish this involves asking them to find the tabbed arrangement they have learned in a position up the neck or even in a different key. He says, "They may find it differently up the neck or in a different position, and then when they bring it back down they realize they have created a variation."

In 1992 Peter met his current musical partner Chris Brashear and they "just hit it off right away." Chris had been living in Oregon and was playing in the band Kentucky Rose. Peter had heard the band, but had never met Chris. A mutual friend, Roger Wilcox, informed Peter that Chris was moving to Tucson. Peter called other local musicians and arranged a "welcome to Tucson" party for Chris and his family. Peter said, "We quickly became close friends. I love his fiddle playing and his songwriting and I love hearing him play the guitar. He has a great style. I think that people are taking real notice of his flatpicking. His playing is superb." Peter and Chris began playing music together in 1992 and continue to do so to this day as a duo and in the band Perfect Strangers.

Perfect Strangers grew out of Chris Brashear's solo project *Wanderlust*, which was recorded in Arizona in 1999. Chris had invited some of his favorite bluegrass musicians to record that project with him (Peter on guitar, Jody Stecher on mandolin, Bob Black on banjo, Ed Neff on fiddle, and Laurie Lewis on bass) and the group felt so good about playing together that they decided to form a band. Of course, Laurie Lewis had her own band and so the new group had to find a new bass player. Chris called on his old friend from Missouri, Forrest Rose. When Forrest got the call he said, "You expect me to come out and play bass with a bunch of perfect strangers?" And thus a band name was born.

In March of 2003 the Perfect Strangers released their first CD on Rebel Records (*Perfect Strangers*) and have been touring to promote the project. The recording has received rave reviews, as have the band's live performances. If you get a chance to see this band perform live, don't miss it. Regarding the band, Peter says, "It is so much fun to be in that band because the music is heartfelt."

In addition to the new *Perfect Strangers* release, Peter and fellow Perfect Stranger Chris Brashear have released a new duo recording, entitled *Canyoneers*, on Copper Creek records [reviewed elsewhere in this issue]. This project followed on the coattails of Perfect Strangers' CD and Peter and Chris have been doing some touring as a duo to promote that project. Of performing with Chris, Peter said, "The arrangements, singing, and harmonies are so easy because we are familiar with each other's phrasing. Performing with Chris feels very natural and comfortable." Regarding his current schedule, Peter said, "It is exciting to be out playing again. It is a juggling act with the job and family, but we are having a lot of fun." Although Chris is a talented fiddle player, the duo features two guitars on about 75 to 80% of their material. Peter said, "I love twin guitars. Solo flatpicking is hard. Having that rhythm and swapping leads works better." Both Peter and Chris share their singing, songwriting, and picking talents with us on the new project. Peter is an avid river runner and his long-time connection to the deserts, canyons, Colorado Plateau region, and rivers of the American Southwest are apparent in the music on this disc.

Peter's guitar collection would be the envy of any flatpicker. He currently owns two 1937 Martin D-18s and two D-28s, one from 1935 and another from 1944. He played the '35 D-28 for the first year that he was with Laurie Lewis, but after an airline lost the guitar for a few days he decided not to travel with it anymore. He now travels with one of the '37 D-18s. He said, "The guitar is beat up, but it records well, sounds good through a mic, and has good balance. I can't imagine another guitar that I would prefer to play."

Peter intends to continue touring and recording in 2004 with both Perfect Strangers and Chris Brashear. He also intends to continue teaching at guitar workshops when he can (he is scheduled to teach again at

Peter McLaughlin with Laurie Lewis and Tom Rozum

Perfect Strangers: (top, L-R) Chris Brashear, Forrest Rose, Bob Black, (bottom, L-R) Jody Stecher, Peter McLaughlin

Bluegrass at the Beach in Oregon in August 2004). Additionally, he would like to record a project with his brother David. Although David is mostly known for his mandolin playing, Peter said that a project with his brother would be mostly two guitars. Whatever he decides to do in years to come, we are happy that someone with the teaching, picking, and performing talents of Peter McLaughlin is back out on the road and sharing his music with bluegrass enthusiasts all over the country.

The Tunes: On the pages which follow we have transcribed a tune from each of Peter's new recordings. The first is "Bluegrass in the Backwoods" which appears on the Rebel release *Perfect Strangers*. The second tune, "Little Gibson March," was written by Chris Brashear and appears on Peter and Chris' *Canyoneers*, a Copper Creek Records release. The transcription from "Little Gibson March" is Chris' solo.

Like his musical partner Peter McLaughlin, Chris Brashear is a working professional, who just also happens to be a very talented musician. While Peter spends his days working as a Senior Planner for the city of Tucson, Chris Brashear spends his days surrounded by other people's pets and livestock. Chris is a veterinarian. A multi-talented musician, singer, and songwriter, Chris has spent the majority of his musical life on stage singing and playing the fiddle. However, the guitar was his first instrument and his talent on that instrument is worthy of note.

A native of Missouri, Chris began playing the guitar when he was thirteen, after having played piano and some banjo. He said his father was a Doc Watson and Norman Blake fan and Chris was able to hear Doc and Norman play when they were both on the college circuit back in the 60s and 70s. Chris said, "I was 110% into Doc and Norman right off the bat." Although he never had guitar lessons and learned most of what he developed by listening to recordings, he said that Dudley Murphy was a local player that Chris listened to and he watched what Dudley did to pick up some technique.

By the time Chris was fourteen he had started attending the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, and was able to hear and watch Dan Crary and "all of the flatpickers of that era" (mid-1970s). As his musical experiences widened, however, he still remained

Photo: Jeromie Stephens

Chris Brashear

strongly influenced by Doc and Norman. He said, "They both embodied what I value in music, great style and taste. I love their material, I love their singing, and I love Norman's songwriting."

Chris did not become involved in playing with bluegrass bands until he was in college, but says that he has been in bands off and on since that time. In 1987 he graduated from veterinary school and moved to Oregon. While there he was active with the band Kentucky Rose. The band recorded an independent project and showcased at the IBMA convention in 1992. Chris left the band when he moved to Tucson, Arizona, in 1992.

Chris stayed in Tucson from 1992 through 2000 minus two years spent in Italy. Chris moved to Tucson when his wife entered the University of Arizona's graduate program in cultural anthropology. The trip to Italy was a result of his wife winning a Fulbright scholarship to study there. In 2000 Chris and his family moved to Massachusetts when his wife was offered a teaching position at the University of Massachusetts.

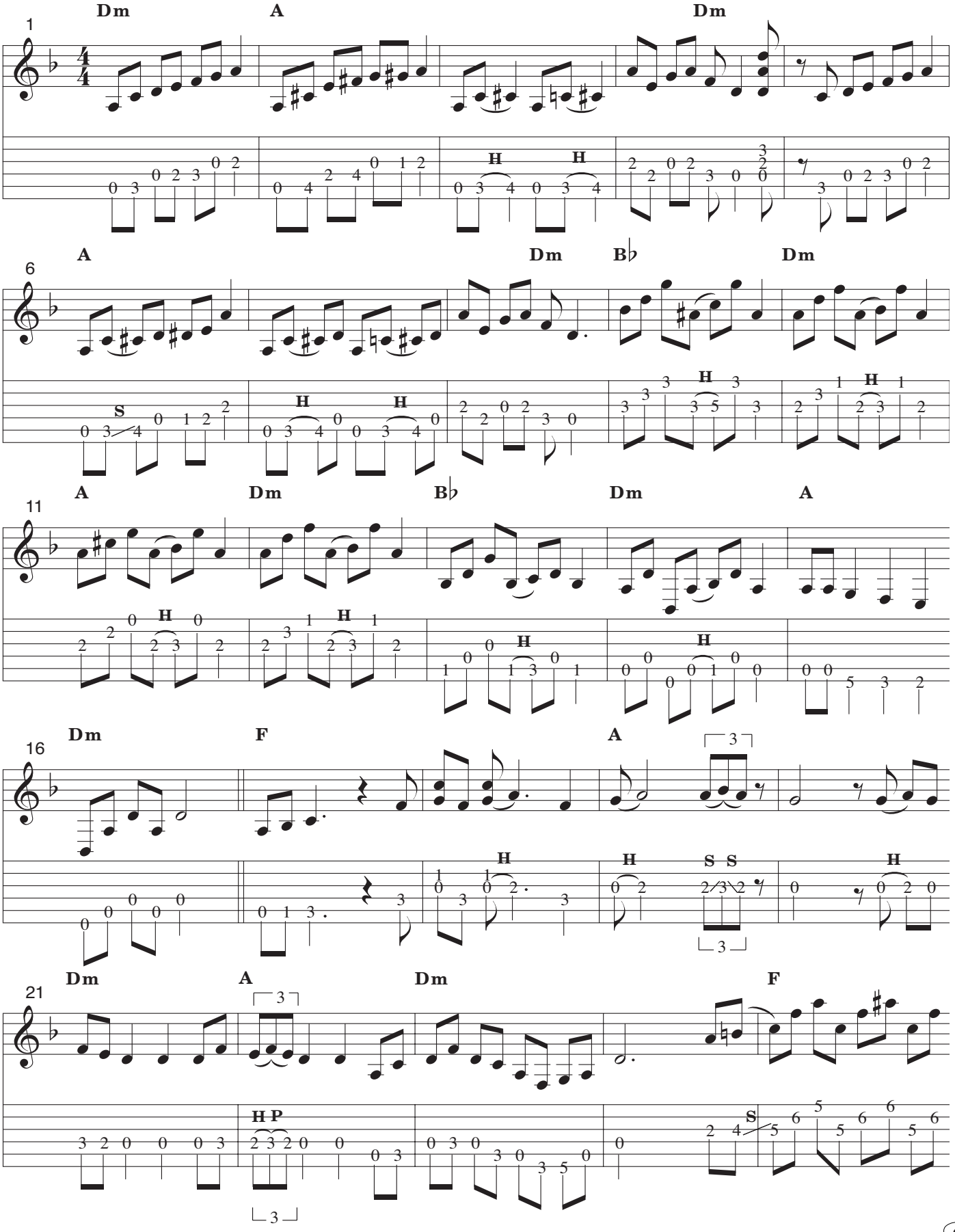
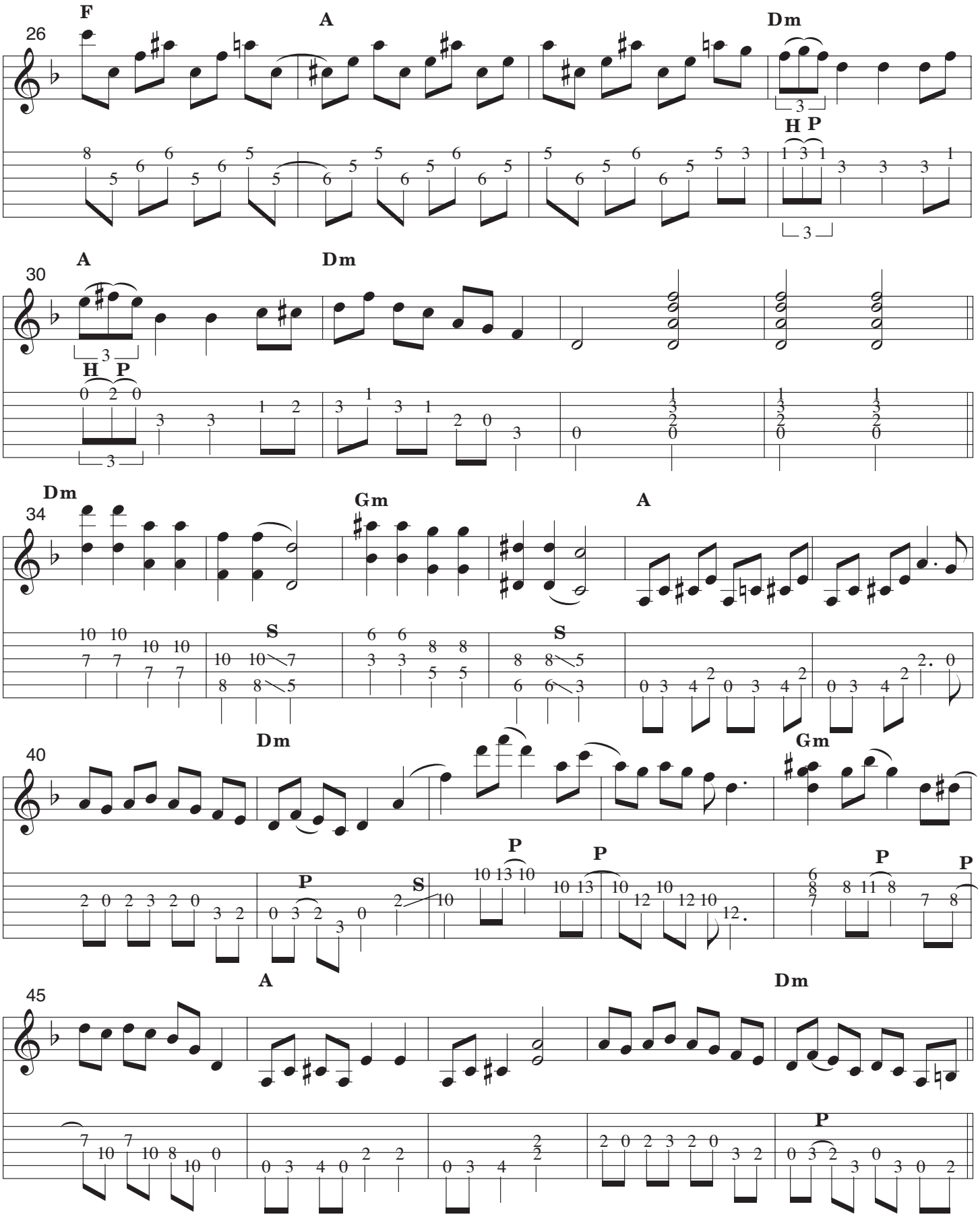
Chris and Peter McLaughlin have been playing music together since 1992. Regarding the musical partnership, Chris said, "Peter and I share a lot of background in terms of influences and we connect on a lot of personal and musical levels. I have never met anyone where I found it so easy and relaxing. It is one of those connections that you rarely find in your life. It comes very natural and we never have to work at it. We have a very good level of communication."

Because Chris plays fiddle in the Perfect Strangers and other bands he has been with and because he has become known primarily as a fiddler and singer, Chris's guitar-playing talents have been understated and overshadowed. However, now that he and Peter McLaughlin have recorded *Canyoneers*, are touring as a duo, and are playing mostly guitar to audiences, enthusiasts will now have the opportunity to add another name to their list of "favorite flatpickers."

Audio CD
Tracks 3

Bluegrass In The Backwoods

written by Kenny Baker

Arranged by Peter McLaughlin
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Bluegrass In The Backwoods (con't)

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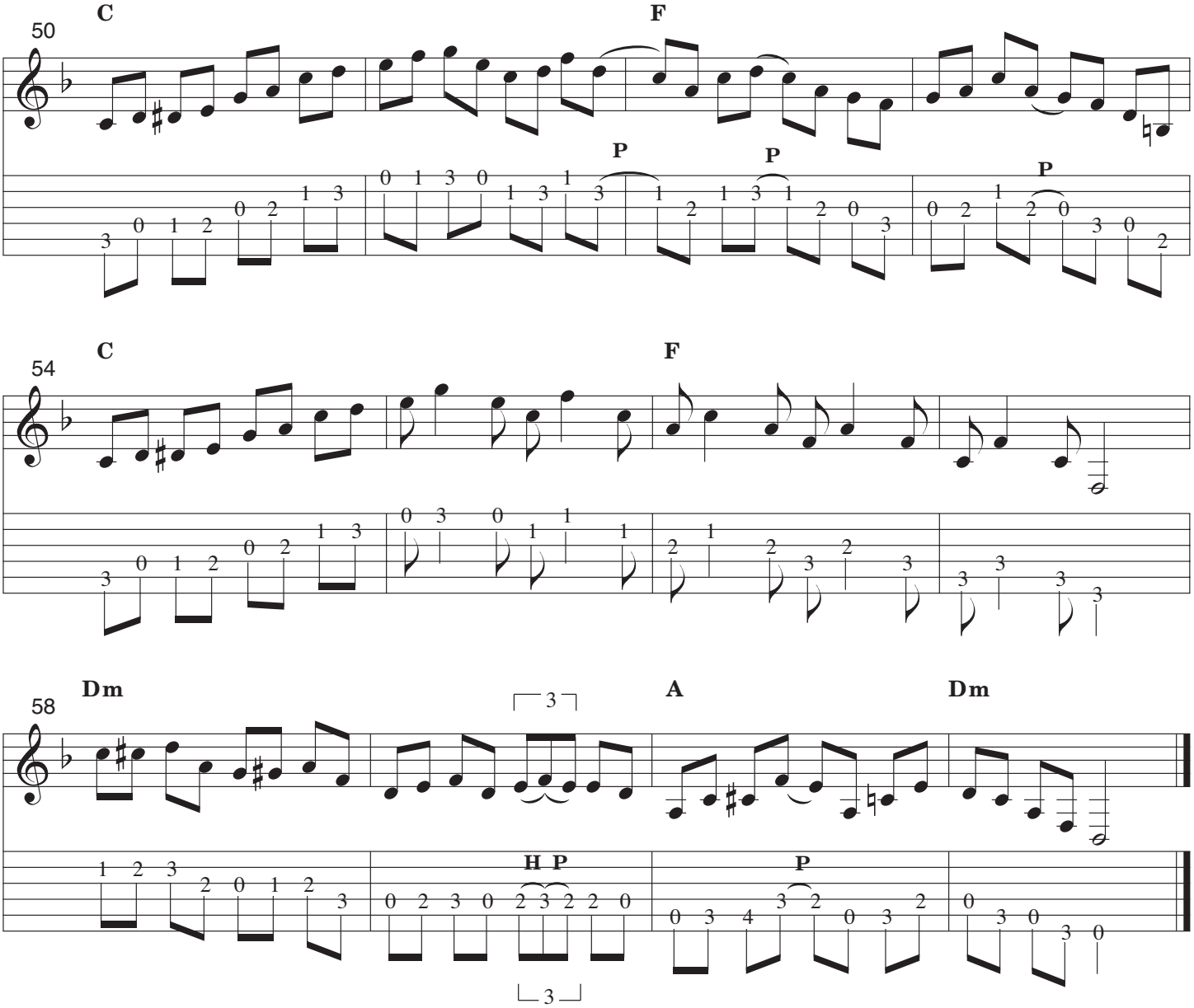
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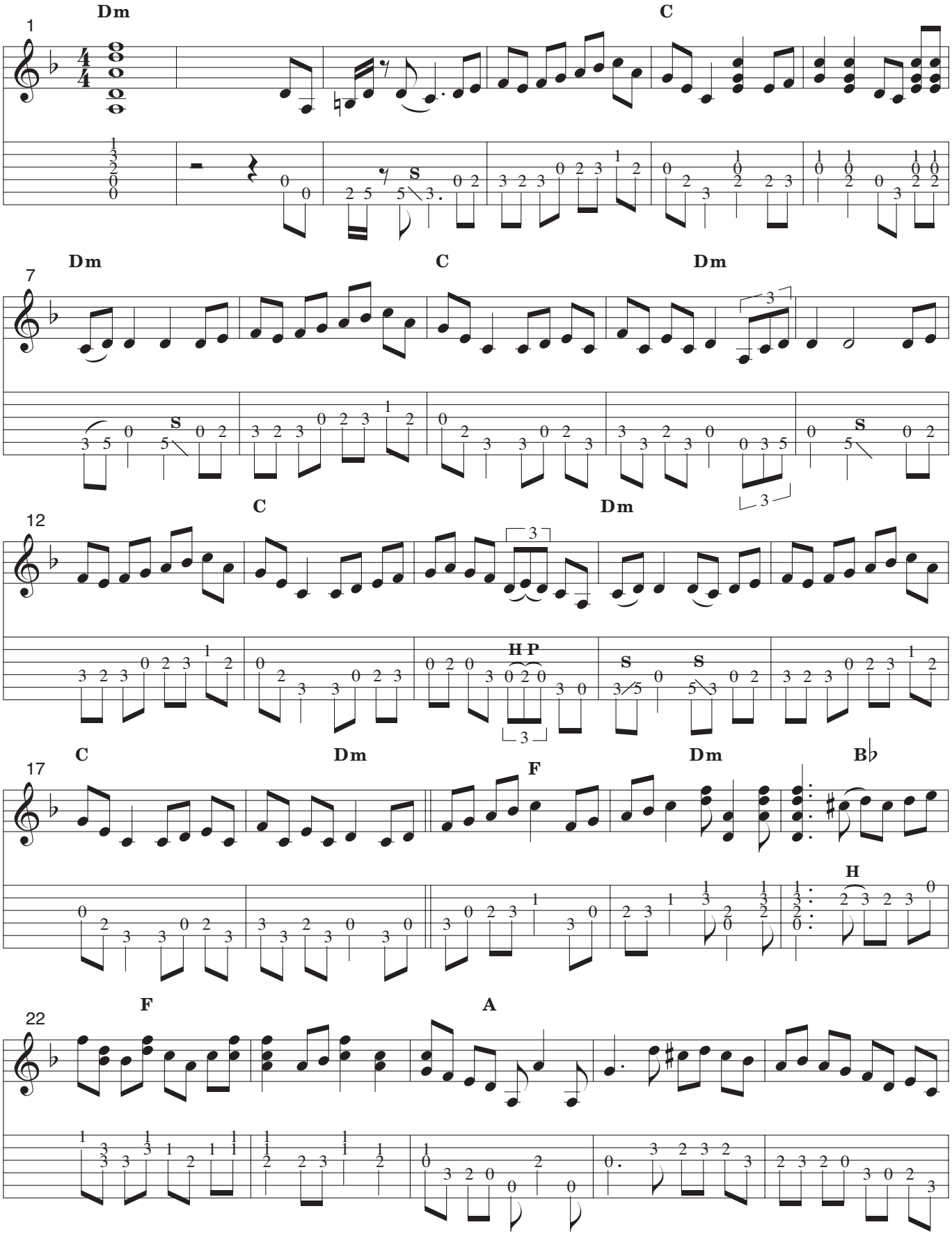
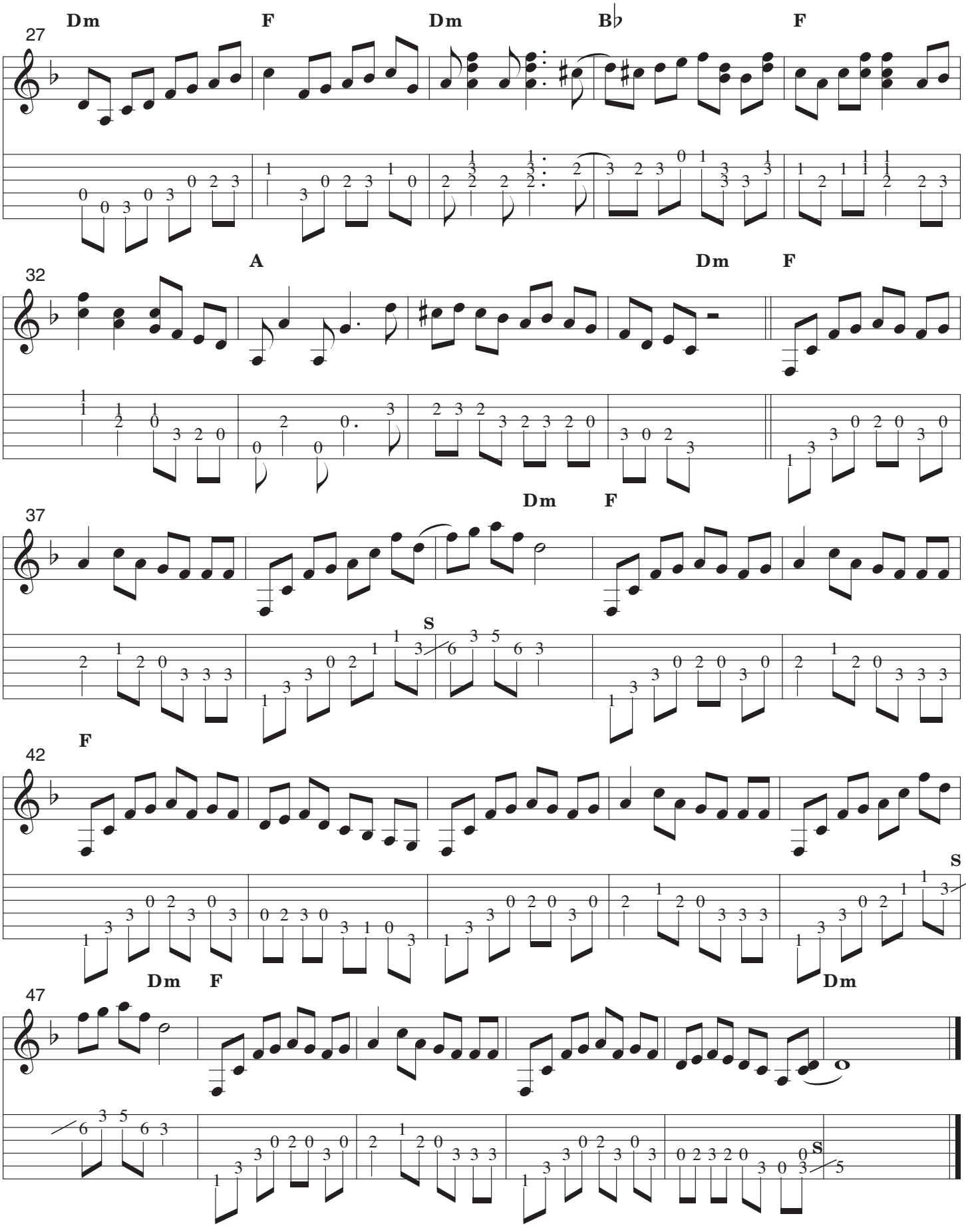
Audio CD
Tracks 4

Little Gibson March

As played by Chris Brashear on *Canyonners*
Copper Creek Records www.coppercreekrecords.com

Written by Chris Brashear
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Little Gibson March (con't)

Snowflake Reel

by Craig Vance

"Snowflake Reel" is a tune that seems to have wandered into the abyss. I have actually only heard a few versions of this one, and what I have done here is kind of smooshed them all into one big snowball.

The first part is typical of the common fiddle tune in format, and then along comes the second, or B part. Suddenly the VI chord appears. In this case, we are capoed up to the 2nd fret playing in C. So the VI chord is the Ab. If that doesn't jump out and grab you, then nothing will. The fingering on this part is a bit tricky to play the way that I have it tabbed. Neither of the versions that I have heard contain a consistent melody line when it comes to the VI chord. It kind of becomes a free-for-all at that point.

When you come upon the VI chord, I think that it is easiest to make the pull-off with the second finger to the first finger. Keep your hand in that position with the index finger on the third fret of the G string. Use your third finger to reach up to the sixth fret, D string. Follow through that while continuing to keep the index finger in place for stability. That will ultimately come in handy when you arrive back to the G string for that succession of three notes. Then you simply slide the first finger up to the fourth fret on the B string and follow with the third finger up two frets. It will take a bit of repetitiously playing that entire section for it to work comfortably.

It might get you to experiment with finding other patterns in place of that for the Ab. After all, that is what helps us expand our creativity.

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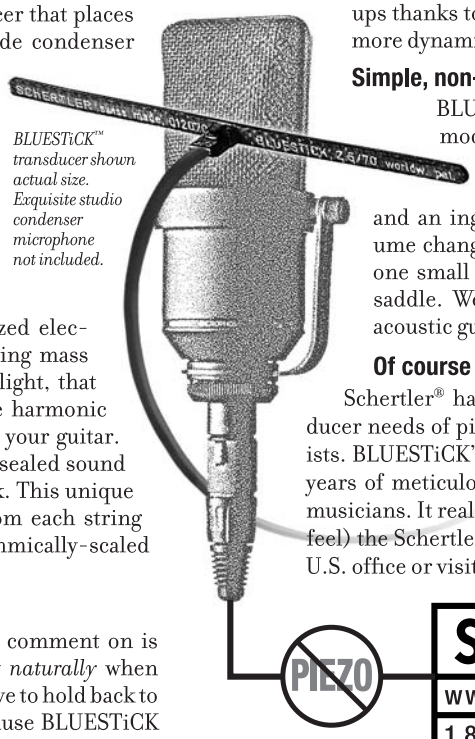

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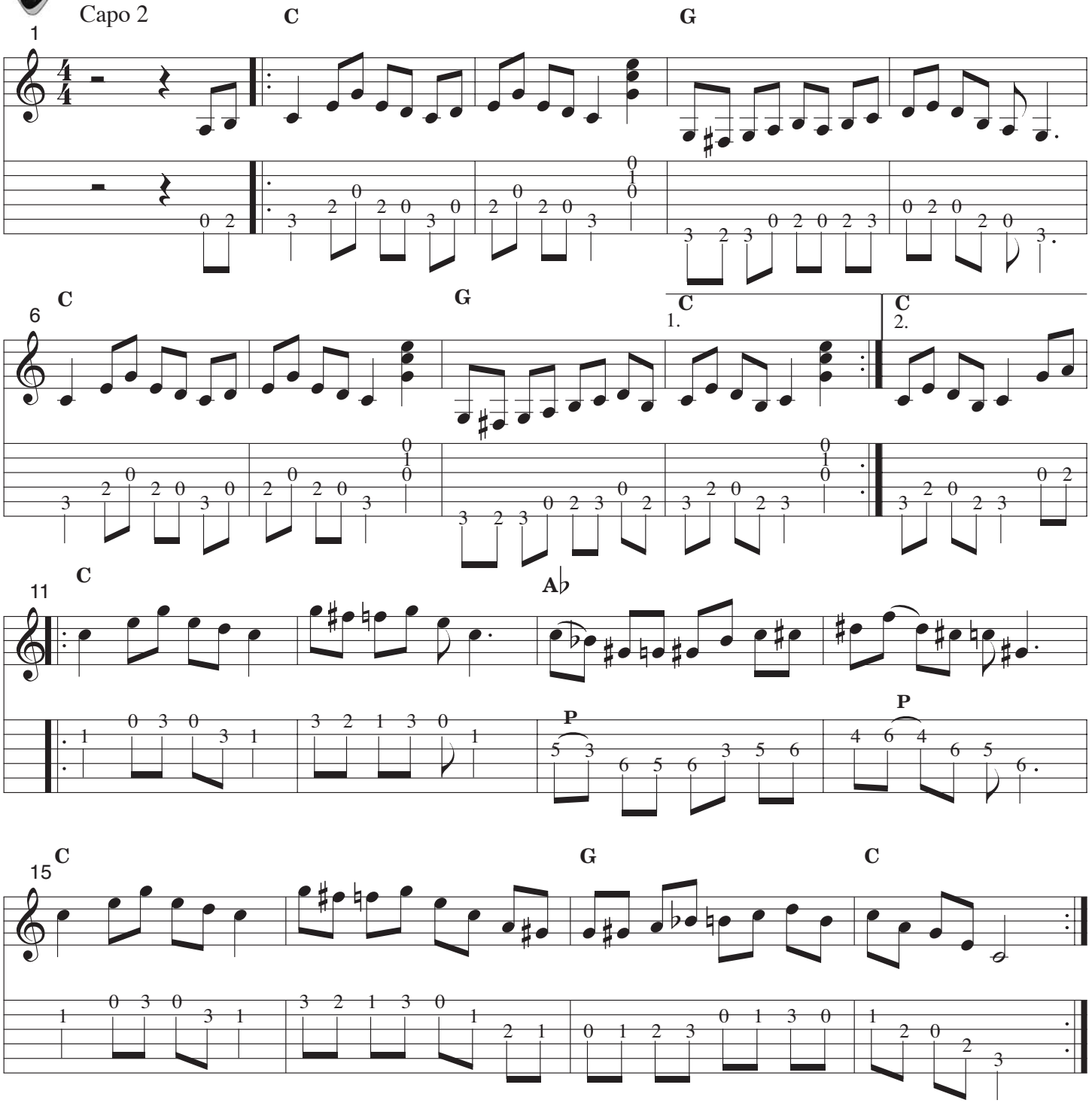
Audio CD
Tracks 6 & 7

Snowflake Reel

Arranged by Craig Vance

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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Musical Pig Latin

I've always preached that the "do, re, mi" scale is just an exercise and not very interesting. But what if we just tried turning it into Pig Latin? In other words, let's play a little game to break up the order of the scale in a pattern, just to make it more interesting. Now I'll be the first to admit that the major scale has been used in some songs very successfully. The Beatles' "Hello Goodbye" comes to mind. It's just straight up the scale and it fits in the song very nicely.

But we're not the Beatles, so just for fun, let's see what happens if we take the plain old major scale and turn it into "Ig-pay Atin-lay." We'll talk in terms of numbers first, and then we'll later lay it in tabulature out on your guitar for the keys of G and C. First we start up the scale playing 1-2-3. Simple enough. Then we go back to "1" and play it again. Next we play 2-3-4. Then we go back and play "2." Then we play our next set of three scale steps, which will be 3-4-5.

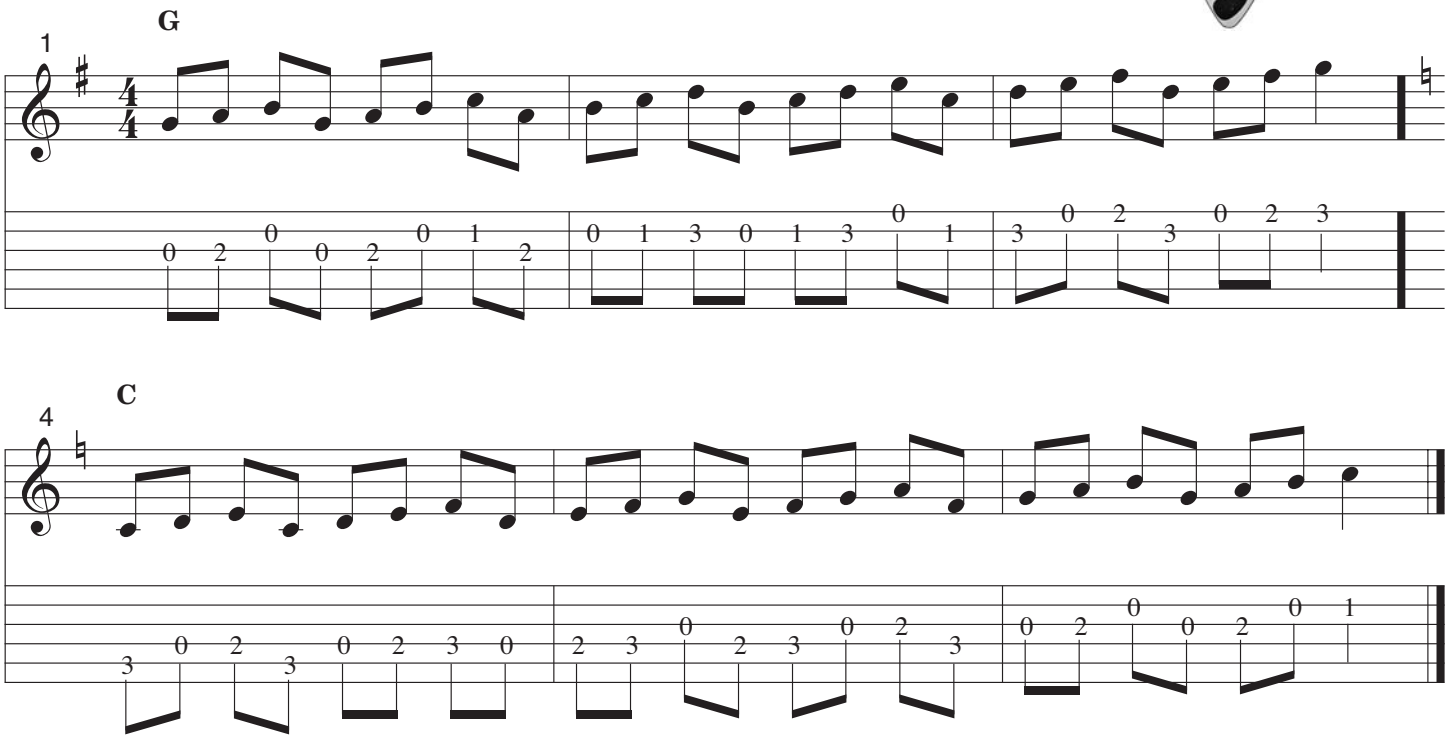
OK, now you can start to see the idea of this pattern starting to take shape. We're just playing three notes up the scale, going back to the first note, then we advance to the second note of the scale and play three consecutive notes, then we go back to the start of that three notes, then we take the next three, and so on up the scale. We can do several octaves if we have enough guitar left or we can cap it off at one octave. It's great for your fingers, it's an interesting puzzle, and most of all, you can use it as a hot lick in any song and in any key.

Now aren't I a clever guy for thinking this up? Well, er, uh, actually this little pattern idea was one of the most popular bluegrass licks in the 1970s. It was used by banjo, mandolin, fiddle, and guitar players and I dare say it was the 70s "NewGrass" equivalent of the Lester Flatt G-Run. In fact it was so popular that Alan Munde wrote a banjo instrumental—"Molly Bloom"—based on this lick. My guitar arrangement of this tune is shown on the next page.

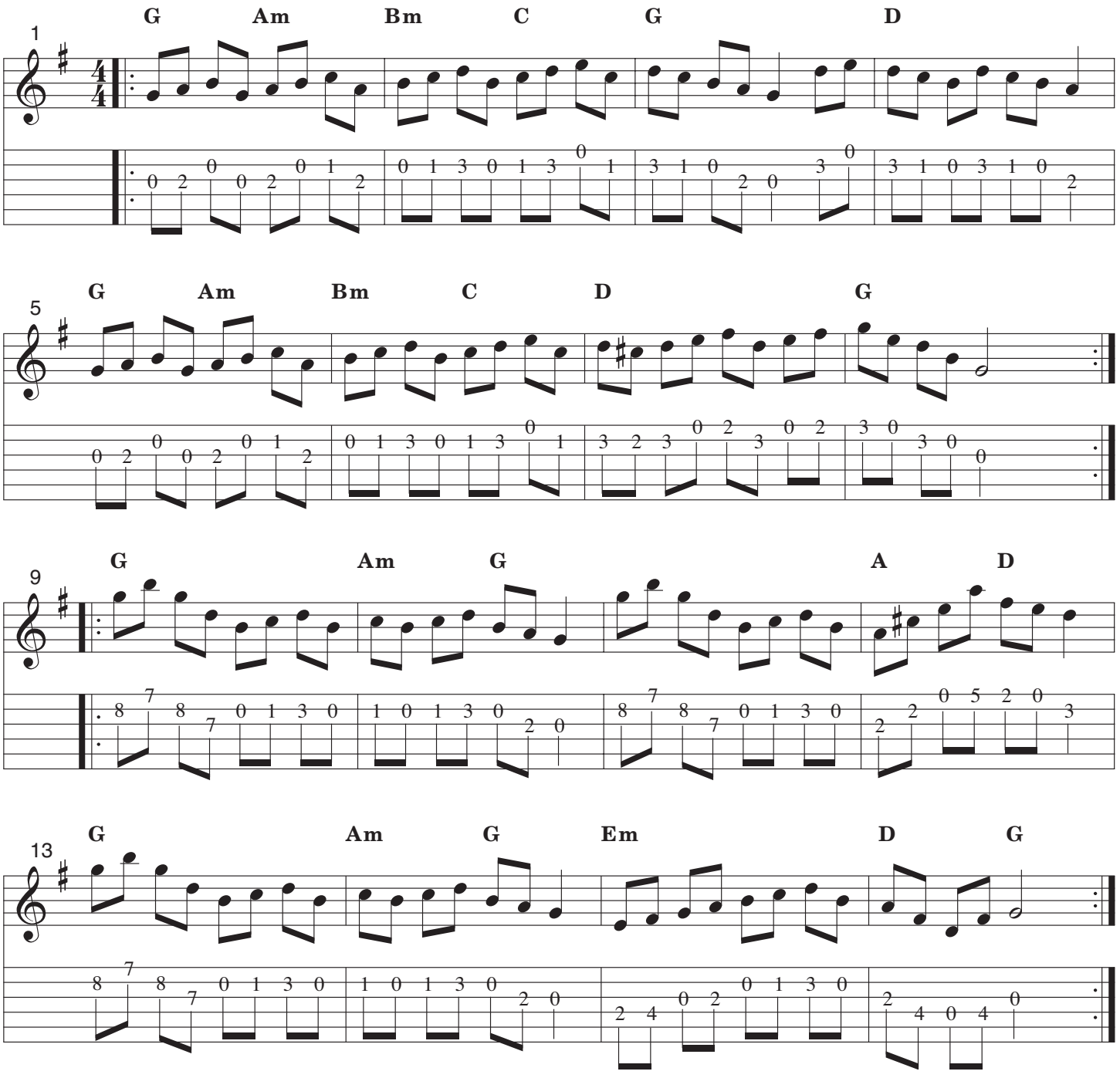
So if you're in your first year or two of guitar, or if your accumulated guitar experience is roughly the same, this little exercise will be an ideal next step in your progress. On last little hint: alternate your pick direction (down-up-down-up). Musical Ig-pay Atin-lay will get your chops together!

If you enjoy this workout and would like to take it further, maybe we'll expand on it a little next issue. In the meantime, you might be able to venture out on your own by trying it in other keys, trying it in descending order, and trying it up the neck in closed position.

Exercises:

Audio CD
Tracks 8 & 9

Audio CD
Tracks 10 & 11

Molly Bloom

Arranged by Dan Huckabee

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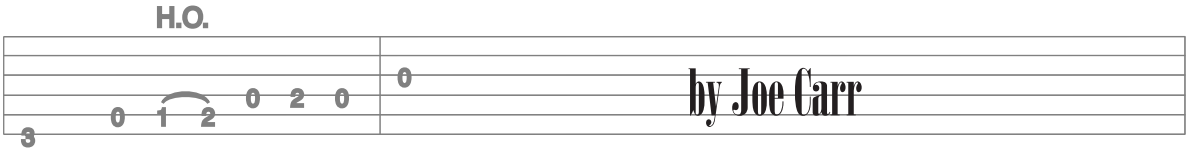

by Joe Carr

Audio CD Track 13

Playing Rhythm: "Little Rock Getaway"

One of the first full-of-chords tunes I learned on rhythm guitar was "Little Rock Getaway." This swing number worked its way slowly into bluegrass circles with recordings by Don Reno and others.

The tune was written in 1938 by Joe Sullivan and like many older songs we now know as instrumentals, it has lyrics! Just like the title says, it is about a little cottage: "I get away to Little Rock whenever I'm blue/And from my little rocking chair, I take in the view."

The original sheet music is written in Bb, while most bluegrass style pickers choose G or C. I remember feeling quite proud of myself when I finally got these changes flowing. Here are the chords in both C and G and a number chart. Each letter gets four beats. Letters in parenthesis get two beats each for a total of four beats in each parenthesis. This means chords in the parentheses only have time for a bass note followed by a strum. Symbols are M = major, m = minor, dim = diminished.

Key of C

//: (C E7) (Am C7)
(F A7) (Dm D#dim)
(C Am) (Dm G7)
first ending (C C#dim) (Dm G7) ://
second ending C C7

F F#dim C C7
F F#dim C G7

(C E) (Am C7)
(F A7) (Dm D#dim)
C G7 C C

The tune is in an AABA format. To continue playing the tune replace the last phrase of the tune with the turnaround chords after the first A ending: (C C#dim) (Dm G7)

Here are the chords in G:

Key of G

//: (G B7) (Em G7)
(C E7) (Am Bbdim)
(G Em) (Am D7)
1.(G G#dim) (Am D7)://
2. G G7

C C#dim G G7
C C#dim G D7

(G B7) (Em G7)
(C E7) (Am Bbdim)
G D7 G G

And here's a **number chart:**

//: (1 3) (6m 1)
(4 6M) (2m #2dim)
(1 6m) (2m 5)
first (1 #1dim) (2m 5)://
second 1 1

4 #4dim 1 1
4 #4dim 1 5

(1 3) (6m 1)
(4 6M) (2m #2dim)
1 5 11

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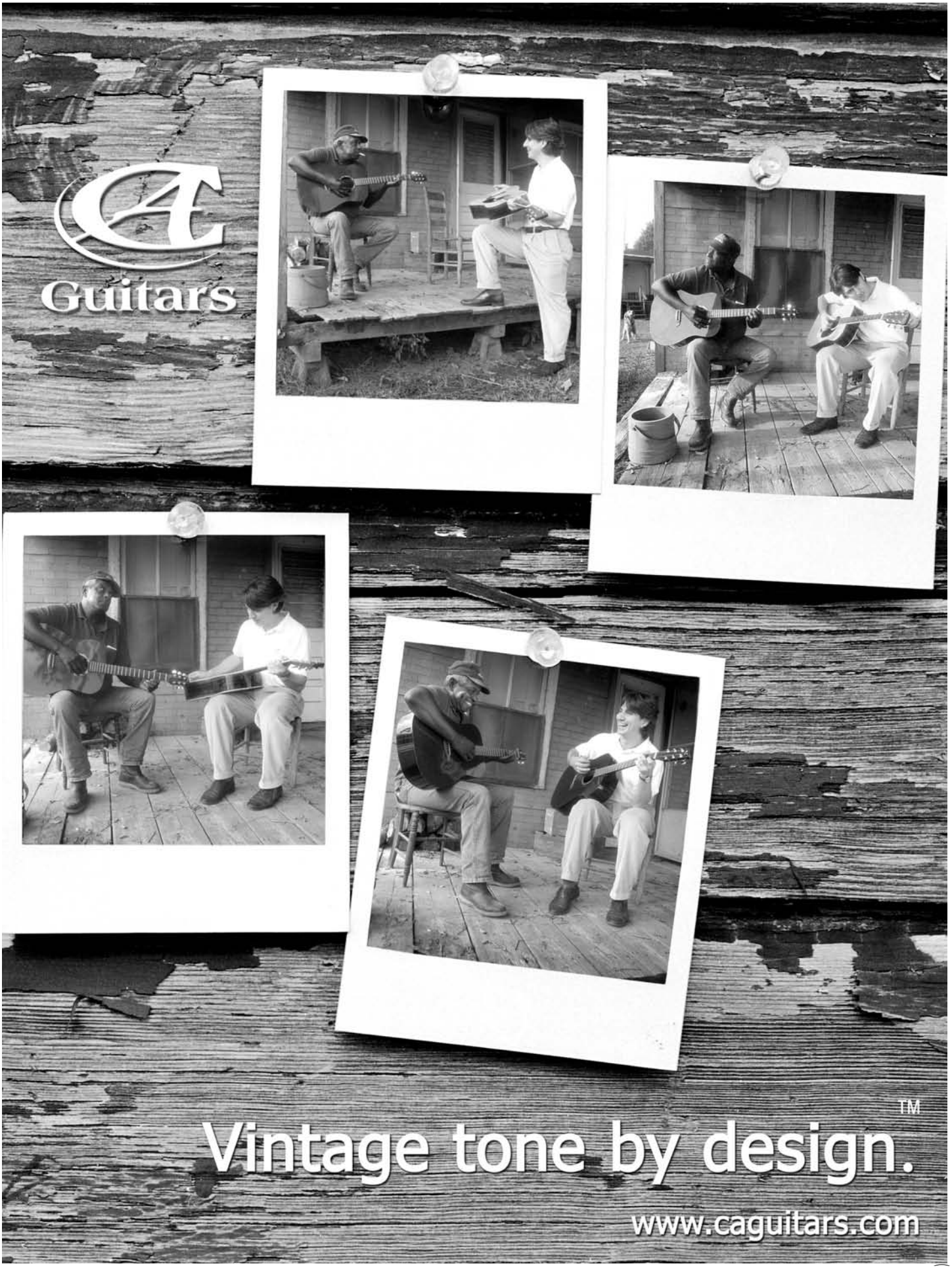
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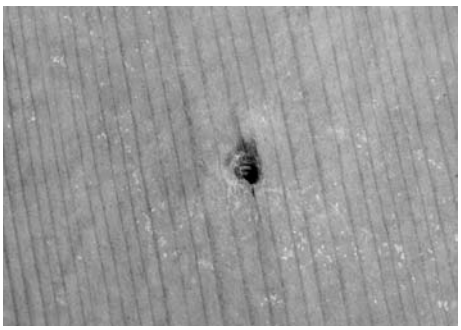
by Frank Ford

A Not-So-Random Harvest

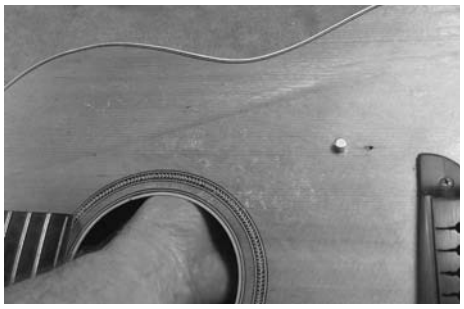
This 1930s Tonk Brothers Washburn dreadnought sized rosewood guitar had a pickguard added by someone who thought the idea was to attach it with a two nice wood screws. At least they were small screws! The screws stayed in place long enough to rust a bit and stain the surrounding spruce, making for a couple of nasty looking black holes.



Before I go any further, let me introduce you to a pair of tools I made for this job. The first is a little gouge, and it's pretty much like any other little shallow gouge, except that I've ground the edge very thin. It's so thin that if I were to use it on hardwood, the edge would break. The idea is to have the most acute possible cutting angle so I can take tiny shavings off the spruce top, much as I'd be able to shave with a straight razor.

The second tool is a little gouge that works on a pull stroke, and it has a cutting hole much like the rounded punched holes in a cheese grater. Here, the plan is to be able to reach inside the guitar and take shavings off the inside of the top.

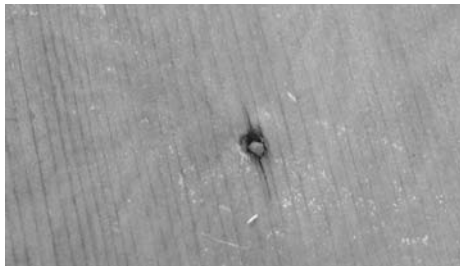
And, that's where I started this little adventure. I wanted to be able to inlay the hole with a piece of spruce that would come as close as possible to matching the surrounding wood. It would have been easy for me to find a piece of scrap spruce that had exactly the same grain spacing, but it would be nearly impossible for me to find one that had precisely the same grain run out, color and reflectivity, so my aim was to reach inside, very near the hole and carve out a piece. To improve my aim, I dropped a little magnet on the top of the guitar to help me locate the tip of my little steel tool as I touched it to the underside of the guitar top.



After a fair bit of scrabbling around in there, I was able to pry up and break off a little flake of spruce from an area right in line with the hole, so I captured some of the identically spaced spruce grain. If you look closely, you'll see I made a mark on one end, so I'd be sure of which end faced "north."

Since I was going to inlay new wood from the top, it really didn't matter what wood I used to fill the hole to give it structural stability. So, I simply glued in a humble little round toothpick:

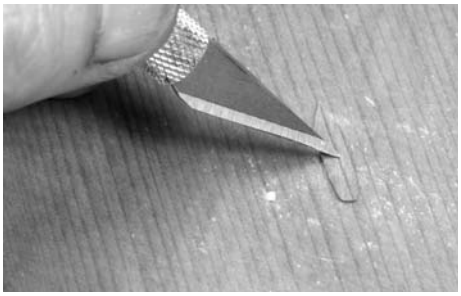
After the hole was filled and the toothpick trimmed off, it still looked mighty bad, partly because of the rust stain all around the area.



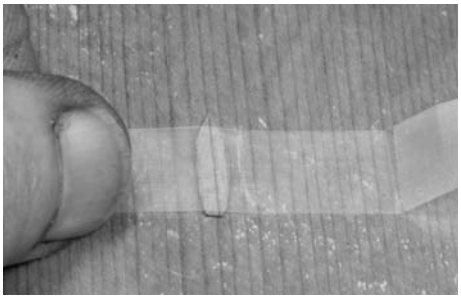
Now, with the small razor sharp gouge, I pared out some of the discolored area around the old hole. I made the cut as shallow as possible at the sides and edges, so the new wood might "blend" into the surrounding area once it had been leveled.

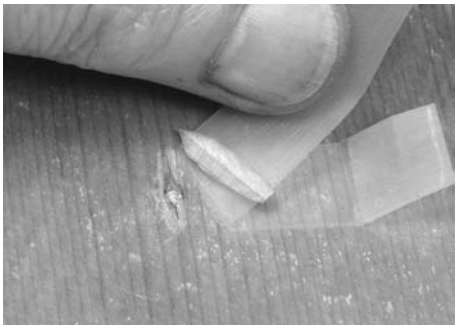
Taking my harvested flake of spruce, I carved it to fit the gouged recess. It was hard to hold the little piece without dropping it, and I made sure I kept one end shaped like a point so I'd always know which way the piece was to be oriented:

Lots of trial fitting and slow cutting gave me a piece that sat right into the hole, sticking up above the surface by a couple of thousandths of an inch. By now, it was starting to look very much as though it belonged right there:

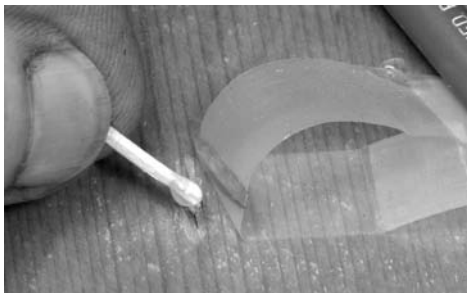


I taped the patch exactly in place with some clear tape, jockeying it this way and that until I was satisfied with its fit and orientation:

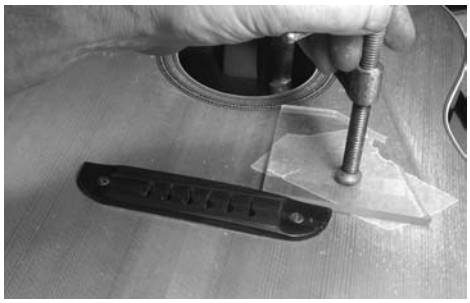




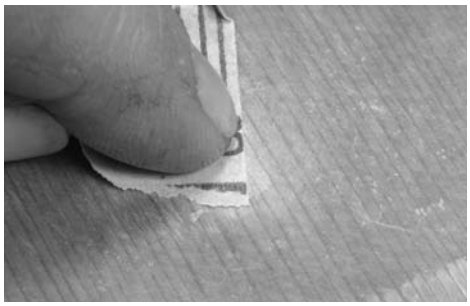
I was able to peel the tape back, bringing the patch with it, so I could stick some clear hot hide glue under it, and drop the patch right back in the recess with assurance that it wouldn't shift position. I chose clear hide glue because it is the least likely of any glue to show a "glue line" or stain, which can be a real problem in patching naturally finished spruce.



A clamp this size may seem like overkill, and it is, but it was the one that was handy at the time. I used a big flat acrylic plate on top to make sure the patch was pressed into place evenly and level with the surrounding wood. That's a piece of waxed paper under the acrylic to keep from getting the whole assembly stuck together:

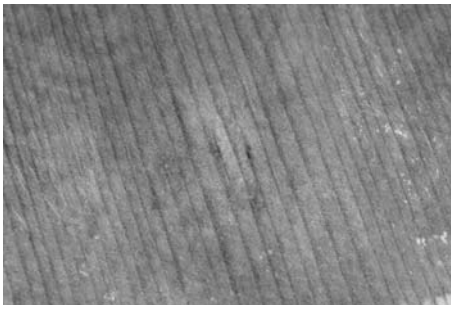


After the glue dried overnight, I washed off the excess that squeezed out, scraped the patch level: and "scuffed" the area with some fine sandpaper:



A bit of orange shellac brought the color surprisingly close to the original amber finish:

After a bit of French polishing, the job was complete, and that ugly screw hole was no longer noticeable from across the room:



Now, all I have to do is fix the other pickguard screw hole. . .

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Dusty Miller

This is a classic three-part fiddle tune out of Texas. I love the fingerings of the A part. It is true Texas fiddle tune fashion. The Texas style is one where you play yourself into a corner and work your way out. The example of Texas style is in the rocking on and off and all around the melody notes in the 1st, 3rd and 5th measures. Notice the weave?

Use the fingerings as they are marked and you should be fine.

I have also added a few 1/8-note hammer-on triplets. Be sure to snap them into place. You try to make the last note of the triplet louder than the first. This is all done with the left hand and concentration.

Have a blast with this classic fiddle tune. Other places you can hear this tune are my *Circles* CD and Dan Crary's *Bluegrass Guitar* now available on CD. Also try to find fiddle greats Benny Thomasson and Herman Johnson picking this one and you will get a great cross-reference of what takes place within the boundaries of this tune.

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Dusty Miller

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

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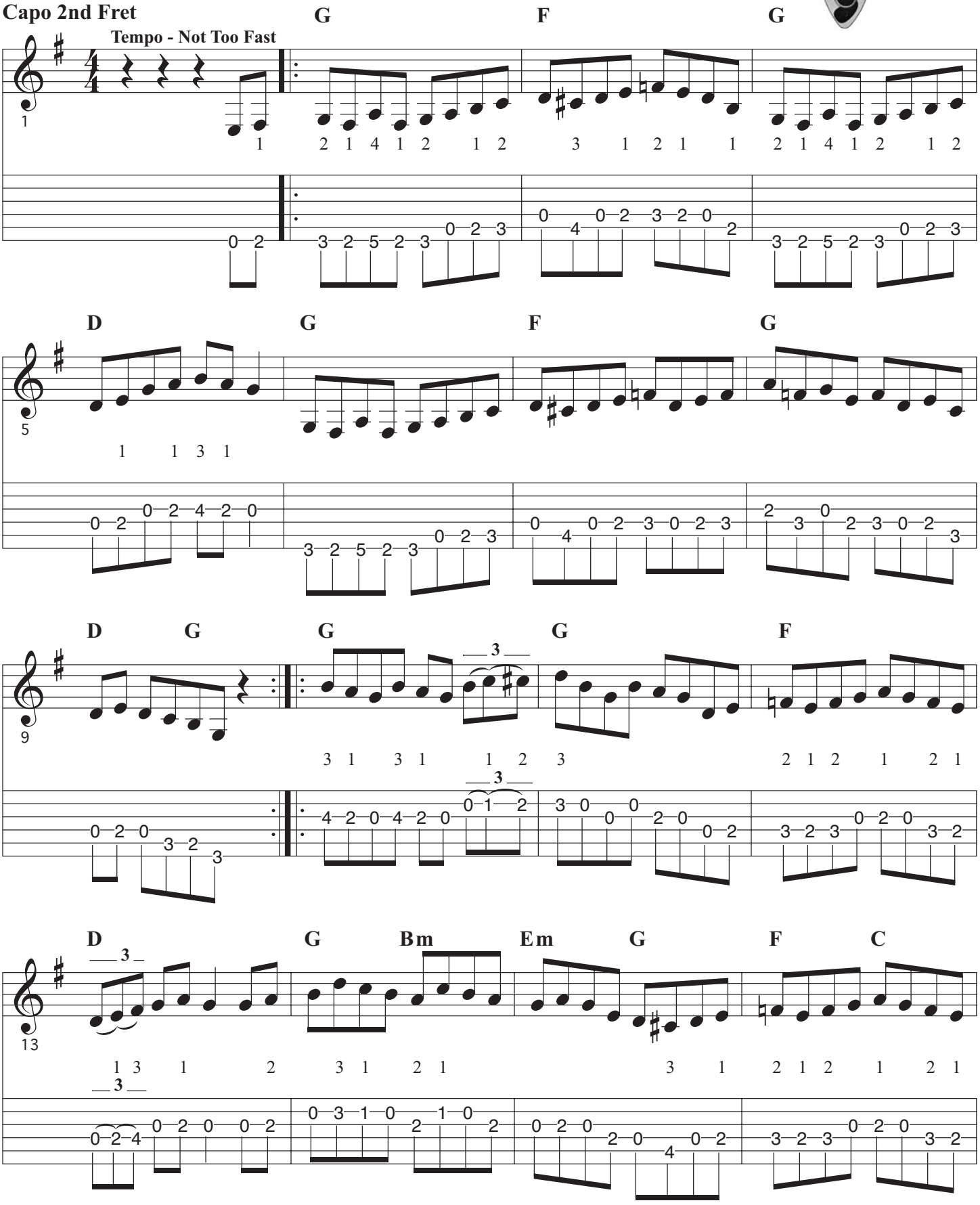
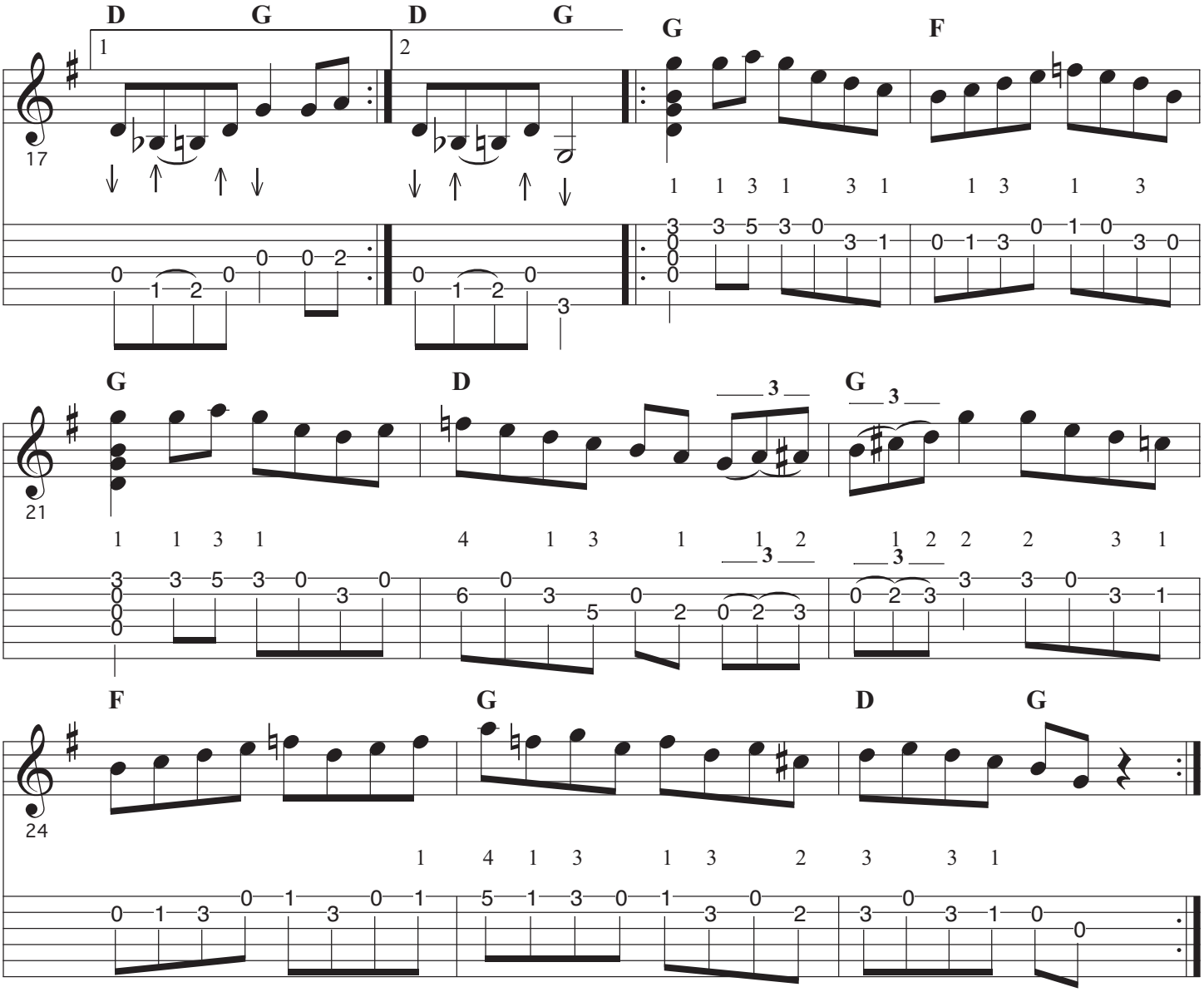
Tracks 14 & 15

Key of A
Capo 2nd Fret

Tempo - Not Too Fast

Dusty Miller (con't)

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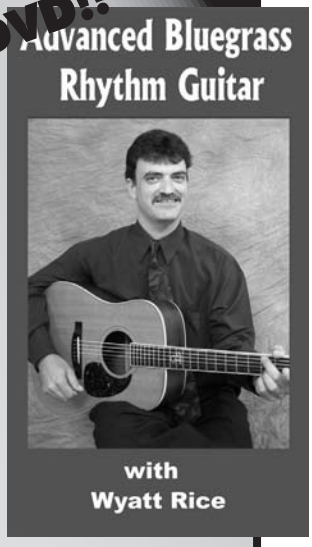

In this 90-minute video, rhythm guitar master Wyatt Rice teaches you how to greatly expand your rhythm guitar abilities by teaching: crosspicking rhythm; syncopated rhythm; a variety of right hand patterns combined with left hand technique to develop a "groove" rhythm; unique bass runs; passing chords; chord substitutions; and chord inversions.

Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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Adventures in Acoustic Music: G Major Arpeggio

by John Carlini

This column will focus on arpeggios, what they are, and why and how we should practice them.

Yeah, it's a dry subject, but I will try to make it more interesting, certainly challenging, and well worth your time and effort.

An arpeggio consists of the notes of a chord played or written in sequence ascending and descending. I will limit the scope of this discussion to one arpeggio, G Major. A major chord consists of the 1st, 3rd, and 5th step of the major scale. In the case of G Major, that would be G, B, and D.

In the illustration example, I have outlined a three-octave G Major arpeggio which traverses the length of the fingerboard. The numbers next to the notes represent the fingers to be used. The zig zag line represents the "path" to follow, ascending and descending. Do not repeat the top note, G. Simply use it as a pivot point to reverse direction. Similarly, when repeating the arpeggio, do not repeat the bottom note, G.

The first thing to do is play through it a few times, paying attention to the two shift points. Put some time into memorizing the pattern. Use the dots on your fingerboard as reference points. When you can play the arpeggio without looking at the chart, you are ready to begin working on it! Please check occasionally to be sure that you are using the designated fingering. Keep in mind that you are practicing this arpeggio for only one reason: to improve your guitar playing!

Let's look at those two shift points. When moving from the fifth fret, 5th string (D), to the tenth fret, 5th string (G) with the fourth finger, strive to eliminate as much fret noise as possible and move as quickly as you can. You want to achieve equal sound, sustain and tone on each note as best you can. The same applies when moving from the second string, 8th fret (G), to the second string, 12th fret (B). Keep the thumb of your left hand behind the neck and use it as a slide.

Focusing on the right hand, use strict alternate picking throughout! Note your body language. Try to channel all energy into your hands and fingers. Keep your shoulders, neck, and facial muscles relaxed.

OK? How are you doing? Lots to think about, right? Get out your metronome!

Set your metronome to a fairly slow click, say 70 or 80. Now play the arpeggio at the rate of one note per click. Try to line up each attack with each click. What we're going for here is relaxed concentration. When you are comfortable with that exercise, increase the rate to two notes per click. Twice as fast! You will have to work on the shift points. Isolate and work out problem areas.

Keep in mind all the things we've discussed: tone, sustain, accuracy, fret noise, relaxation, alternate picking, etc. (Is your thumb behind the neck!?)

When you are comfortable, increase to three notes per click! Count one-and-ah, two-and-ah, and so on. Are you beginning to realize the incredible value of this exercise? This may take a few days or a week to achieve, but if you approach this with consistency, you will succeed. And your playing ability will improve. Guaranteed!

Now here's a hurdle to overcome: four notes per click. Count one-ah-and-ah, two-ah-and-ah, and so on. Now, here's a problem. There are 18 notes in this arpeggio from bottom to top and back down. Since 18 is not a multiple of four, you will need to play the arpeggio twice (36 notes) before the bass note (G) occurs on the 1st beat again. That means that you will have to accommodate groups of four notes on unusual beats, a valuable skill to achieve and, again, very much worth the effort.

Five notes per click? Of course! Absolutely! This is a milestone and will require more work. Hey! Six notes per click seems easier in comparison because we are accustomed to counting in 6 via 6/8 or march time.

And at that point, personally speaking, I think I've reached my "level of incompetence." I need more practice.

Good luck!
Have fun!
See you next time.

Please visit John's web site (www.johncarlini.com) for the latest performance info and acoustic music news. Check out the new CD by the John Carlini Quartet, The Game's Afoot!, featuring Don Stiernberg, Brian Glassman, and Steve Holloway w/special guest Pat Cloud at www.fgmrecords.com

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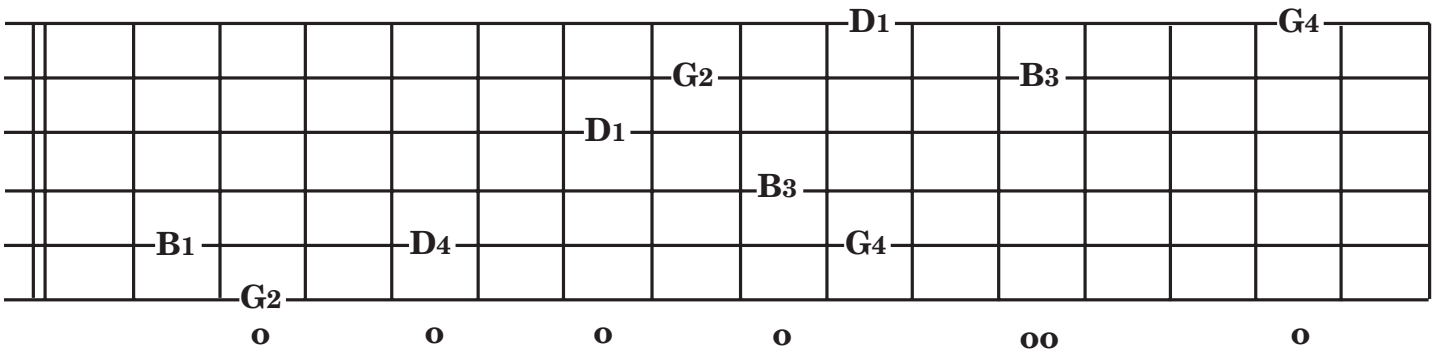
G Major Arpeggio Fretboard Diagram



(Large Letter = Note Small Number = Finger)

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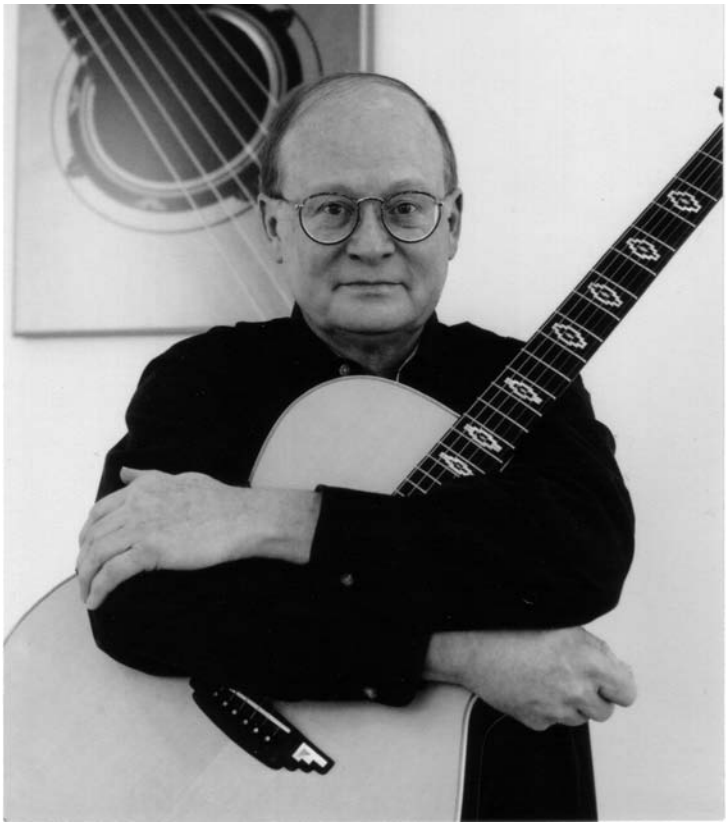
Columnist Profile:
Bill Bay

by Dan Miller



Recently I was reading some posts on an Internet guitar forum and someone suggested that the Country Music Awards or the Grammies should offer a special award every year for the best music instruction. The person posting to the list had some suggestions regarding possible recipients. At the top of that list was Mel Bay. I don't think there are many people who have learned to play the guitar in the past 50 years who have not bought and worked with a Mel Bay publication. In many genres of music, Mel Bay is the only publisher who carries music instruction books relating to specific playing styles and advanced playing concepts because that is their specialty.

For the past several years *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* has had the good fortune of having the current President of Mel Bay Publications, Mel's son Bill Bay, as a regular contributor. I thought it might be of interest to our readers to know more about Bill and his company and so last April I made a trip to the company headquarters in Pacific, Missouri, to visit with Bill and get a tour of the facility. As I talked with Bill about the history of Mel Bay publications, I realized that the story was even more interesting than I'd originally imagined. Due to Mel's persistence and dedication to excellence and his son Bill's forward thinking and creativity, Mel Bay Publications has made it easier for all of us to learn and play the music we love.

Mel Bay grew up in the Ozarks in the town of Bunker Hill, Missouri. Paul Hill, a local fiddle player, showed Mel his first guitar chords and enlisted him to play guitar at local barn dances. Mel's very first gig lasted four and a half hours. His son Bill remembers, "He told me that his hands were raw and bloody by the end of the evening." Later Mel moved to St. Louis and began playing on many of the local radio programs and was teaching as many as 100 students a week.

After World War II the government contacted Mel and said that they had heard that he had developed some teaching materials for the guitar and wanted to know if he would consider allowing the government to use those materials under the GI Bill. Mel developed the course for government use and was able to begin teaching students under the GI payment plan.

Mel Bay officially started Mel Bay Publications in 1947. Bill says, "His company struggled along the first few years. He only had two or three books. Back then the only way you really got into publishing was to get one of your books into the New York distributors. If they took your book they could get it around the country. Without that it was pretty difficult. He used to call on them and they would say things like, 'There is no future for the guitar. We have no interest.'"

For about five years Mel Bay traveled around the country selling his books out of the trunk of his car. Bill said, "There weren't that many good teachers. Every city had one or two, and he knew everyone of them by the end of the five years. He had shown them all his material and he knew them on a first-name basis. Then Elvis Presley came along and overnight everyone wanted to learn to play the guitar. So these teachers all over the country had more students than they could handle. Suddenly Dad was then getting calls from these New York distributors, 'We are getting requests for your books; can you get them to us?' Dad was then catapulted into big time publishing overnight."

Bill Bay started out his musical life as a trumpet player. As he was growing up he had a number of bands and at one point the sax player in his band was his friend David Sanborn. Bill took up the guitar while he was a student in college. He said, "I came into the publishing company in 1969. When I came in it was a typical father-son relationship. Dad had about 40 books in the catalog back then and his first question to me was, 'I'd like to have you work here, but what do you think you are going to do? I think we have everything we need.' And so it started from there. Now we have over 4000 products."

Obviously, with Mel Bay as a father, Bill grew up in a musical family and was surrounded by music. He says, "My grandfather played mandolin and Dad was the house guitar player for all of the big clubs and big hotels in St. Louis. This was before TV, so

people really frequented the clubs and the lounges. That is how they got their entertainment. So there were always a lot of big groups coming through town and Dad would always bring them home. Every week there was another famous guitar player home for dinner. I met all of these guys."

In addition to playing in clubs and selling his books, Mel Bay was also a national distributor for John D'Angelico guitars. Bill recalls, "Dad used to sell these guitars and at any given time we'd have about ten of them at the house. A traveling musician would come by and pick one up for about $500. Those things are worth about $50,000 now." When Mel had musicians over for dinner, or to look at the D'Angelico guitars, impromptu jam sessions would inevitably arise.

Bill also remembers, "Dad was in a band called the Sour Noters, which was just a bunch of guys that got together and would jam. That was my first experience. Every so often they'd be at the house on a weekend and my grandfather would get out his mandolin and it was everything you could imagine from swing tunes to fiddle tunes. Most of the guys could really play and I grew up with that."

When Bill began playing the guitar, while he was very much into jazz he had always had a very broad taste in music. He enjoyed folk music, bluegrass, swing, and acoustic music in general. He says that he has also owned and played both a hollow body electric guitar as well as a flat top acoustic. He adds, "As I got into publishing my exposure to music broadened. Things would be sent to us and I would learn something about the style, whether it was Cajun music, TexMex, or whatever. And it is continuing that way."

From the beginning of the business, Mel Bay Publications was known as the publisher who published music that you couldn't learn in school. Bill says, "You could learn to play the clarinet in school, but if you wanted to play harmonica, or great fiddle tunes on a fiddle, or banjo, or guitar, then Mel Bay is who you looked up. So we did that and as I got into it I learned how intricate and in-depth all of these instruments and styles are. It wasn't just enough to publish one or two banjo books because there are so many different styles. You get into C tuning banjo, classic banjo, bluegrass, melodic-chromatic, then you get into the whole clawhammer style that is another stream. Guitar, though, is the most diverse of any instrument. I used to give lectures to music dealers on how to sell guitar music and for years they never got it. Invariably I'd go into a music store and they would have everything from a Beatles guitar book to a chord book, or whatever, all in one bin. Smart retailers have recently started to realize that you have all of these guitar styles and that a guy that is into flatpicking probably isn't going to be into Segovia or Flamenco."

Although Bill says that he is largely self-taught on the guitar, he did have the advantage of his dad's music library. He said, "Dad saved everything he ever learned from. In fact, when he was learning there wasn't a lot of material so he played a lot of clarinet music because the range is identical to the guitar. He could read like crazy. He would play Broadway shows when they came to town and one of his pet peeves was the abuse he received from the string players. He would walk in with his guitar and they would say, 'What is this, a country show?' It used to drive him crazy. So when he wrote his initial guitar method he made it an extremely demanding note reading method and it still is. If you get through all seven volumes of the *Modern Guitar Method*, you can read anything. That was his vision, to make the pick style guitar a legitimate instrument in the views of the musical community." When Bill was learning to play the guitar he went through all seven volumes and says that he is a skilled sight-reader on guitar as a result.

When talking about the history of the guitar since its rise in popularity in the 1950s, Bill said, "The guitar stays strong. We have had only one bad year since I have been with the company and that was in 1984. That was because all of these little Casio electronic keyboards were the rage. A lot of people wanting get into music that year wouldn't pick up a guitar. Instead, they would go to K-Mart and buy a Casio keyboard until they realized that it was more of a toy than a musical instrument. It was short-lived and the guitar came roaring back. Eric Clapton's *Unplugged* brought

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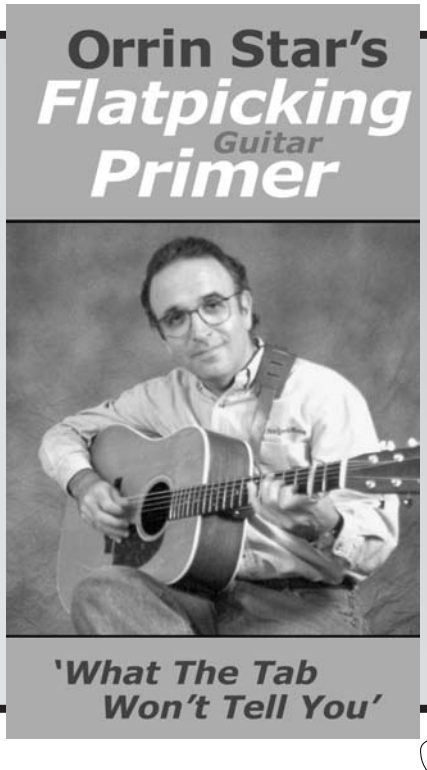


back the acoustic guitar and it has stayed very strong every since."

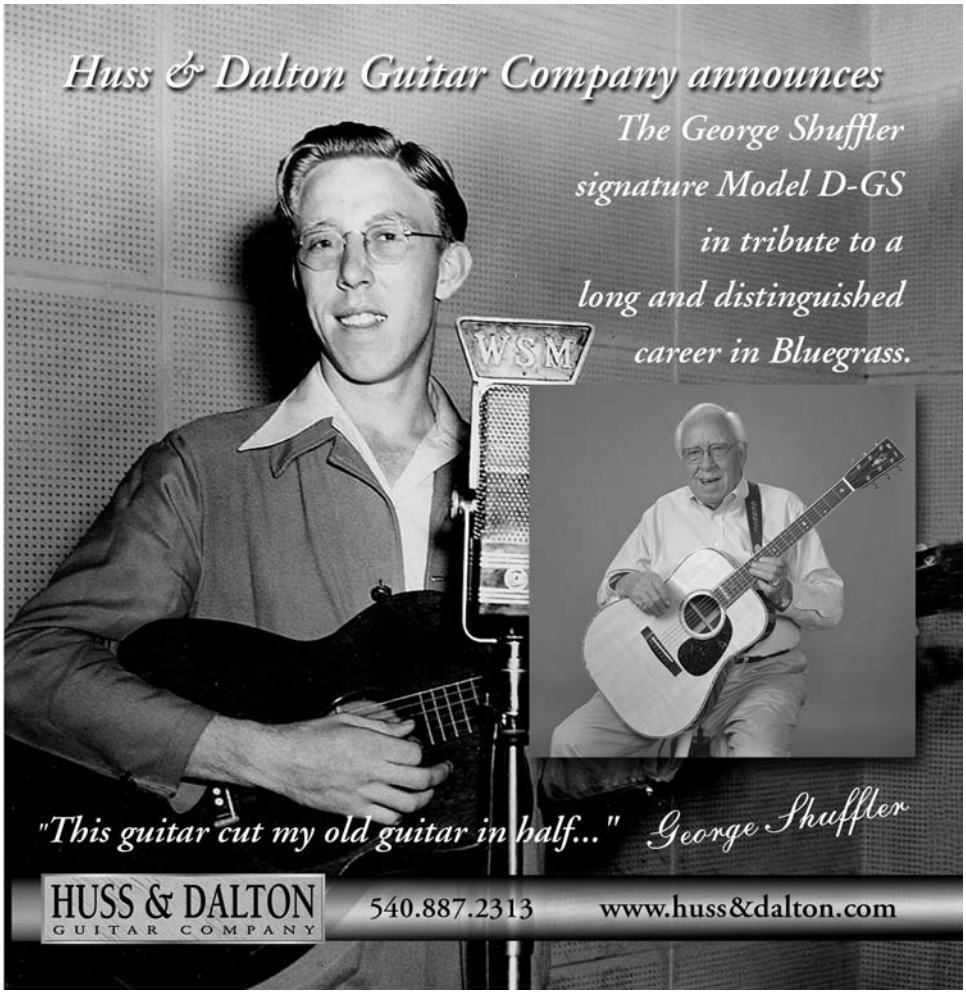
Bill Bay graduated college with a Master's degree in Business in 1968 and went to work in his father's retail store in St. Louis. Mel sent his son to work at the retail store because he felt the publishing company didn't need any help. Bill says, "Then I reached an impasse because I really wanted to go into publishing, but Dad said that the publishing end of the business ran itself and he didn't know if he wanted to do any more books. So I went to work for the big pop music publisher Charles Hansen in Miami. He was huge. He published Glen Campbell, the Beatles, Burt Bacharach, and I got a job with him as their guitar editor. When I was with Charles Hansen I saw all of these areas that were possibilities. When I quit that job and went back to Dad I said, 'Look, you either have to grow the company or it won't be around in ten years because all of these other people know exactly what your niche is and they are going to start competing with you.' At that point, Dad listened and said, 'Tell me what you want to do and I'll support you.' So I came up with a business plan and we started from there. The first three or four things I wrote and published did very well."

When Bill joined his father's publishing company, there were four employees: a guy who did shipping, two secretaries, and Bill. Today the company has 75 employees. Although Mel Bay Publications was extremely successful at the time Bill joined the company, Bill says, "I think that the company was successful, but it had peaked. It was successful because he was the leading guitar publisher during both the Elvis Presley boom and the Beatles boom. Those were the two big guitar booms and he had the number one stuff. When I was growing up he used to ship out of the basement. A truckload of books would come to the house and they would wait in the driveway and another truck would come from one of his New York distributor and they'd move the books to that truck and take off. It was a real easy way to do business." Bill's involvement in the publishing business greatly expanded and diversified the company's material. Bill says, "Publishing is like a stream. As long as you keep fresh water coming in, it continues to go. But the minute you quit putting out new stuff, looking for new directions, revising, you are on your way down."

Although Mel Bay Publications has continued to put out new material and look in new directions, the company has not tread the path of mass marketing and pop music. Bill said, "When I started in this business, there were about 50 publishing companies in the market. Now there are about five and the market has been dumbed down. With fifty publishing companies, you would see a wide variety of things out there. Now the market is driven by the pop companies that are really not interested in publishing stuff for the advanced guitarist. They are interested in personality books—direct tabs things on whoever the latest rock guy is—or the big market out there, 'learn guitar without any sweat or pain in ten minutes.' There is a lot of that out there and that is not who we are. We still are unique in that whatever aspect of guitar that you want we have many, many books. We have stuff that is really tough, and we have some easier stuff. But we are very serious about this and that is what makes us a little different. Because of that we are considered a niche publisher. We'll do things that the pop houses would never consider. And flatpicking is still probably one of those areas because the whole world of flatpicking is a small market and it's got its own style."

Even though Mel Bay Publications publishes a wide variety of material today (on average, 20 new titles a month), it continues to look in new directions, and continues to revise old material. They also still continue to do well with the first method books that Mel Bay wrote over 50 years ago. To date Mel Bay's *Modern Guitar Method* books have sold over 8 million copies. *Modern Guitar Method Grade 1* still sells several hundred thousand copies a year. Bill said, "When we get our print out of the top 20 best selling books of the year, Dad still has maybe four of the top ten. His stuff still sells."

Thanks to a determined guitar teacher from St. Louis and his creative business-minded son, flatpicking guitar players now have more material to learn from than every before. We can all thank Mel and Bill Bay for their hard work and determination and for thinking more about the players than the big bucks. Being players themselves in niche genres of music, that probably came naturally. They can relate to us, and we need to thank them for it. That guy who sent the email about an award for guitar instruction going to Mel Bay Publications was right!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Flatpick Profile:

Vincent Muehter

by Chris Thiessen

You can never tell where your bluegrass epiphanic moment might occur. That's the instant when you "catch on" to the music, when you simultaneously realize how fundamentally simple it is and how intrinsically complex it can be, and a world of possibilities opens. For some, that moment occurs at a festival; for others, at the first hearing of original recordings of the Blue Grass Boys or Reno and Smiley or the Country Gentlemen. It may occur in the shade of a tree in Rosine, KY, at a picking session in Indiana, or on the campus of the University of Montana in Missoula.

Vincent Muehter recalls—at age 6 or 7—literally sitting at his father's feet, watching him play guitar and amazed that anyone could make coherent sound, let alone music from those strings. The house was filled with a wide variety of music, from Johnny Cash to the Beatles and the Doors, from classical to the Kingston Trio. At 11, Vincent began playing guitar himself. In 1979, Vincent's father took him to the Waterloo Bluegrass festival in New Jersey. That was his first real exposure to live bluegrass and his first epiphanic bluegrass moment. Vincent recalls, "I was blown away by Peter Rowan's performance: his stage presence, his songs, his ability to hold and entertain a crowd, and his musicianship."

That was the start of the bluegrass infection. By 15 Vincent was playing mandolin at local festivals with Woody and the Tall Timbers, a band of kids led by a mentoring older gentleman. Vincent's father then introduced him to the playing of Tony Rice, Doc Watson, and Norman Blake. Their expertise, command of the instrument, and fluid control inspired Vincent to explore the depths and voice of the guitar.

At 17, Vincent began to explore new musical genres, choosing to play bass and sing lead in a punk/New Wave/gothic band (although Vincent now admits that those years with the bass greatly influenced his rhythm guitar playing). He was intrigued by the Police's use of rhythm, syncopation, and open space, and by U2's vocal prowess and use of haunting reverberation. Vincent's band shared the stage with a number of influential New York-based bands, including the Ramones and the New York Dolls. He attended NYU for a while, taking general level courses, but then decided to go out west, and transferred to the University of Montana in Missoula. Why Montana? "Well, one factor was that Peter Rowan's singing about the West. It inspired me to explore Western life and the land," he admits.

Unknown to Vincent, Missoula was a hotbed of great acoustic music, and soon after he arrived he sold his electric bass and reclaimed his beloved Martin. "What attracted me back to bluegrass was the purity of the music, its simplistic power. Electric music was, for me, more a series of layers; bluegrass was fully exposed. Your right hand provides the power and works with the left hand to build the fluidity and grace of each note." Vincent had come back to the fold.

But music—although a contributing factor for moving west—was not his primary reason for attending Missoula. In the same way that his musical focus returned to bluegrass, his academic studies began to focus on behavior ecology, specializing in animal communications and the evolution of bird song vocalizations. "Actually, that was a return to roots as well," Vincent admits. "My first recording was when I was about 7, when I walked in the woods of New Jersey taping various bird songs." As an undergraduate and then a graduate student, Vincent balanced the musical and academic aspects of his life. He continued to play in various local acoustic bands while pursuing graduate coursework, studying how birds, wolves, whales, and other animals use vocalizations to communicate territory, mating availability, and social structure. [He's has since published a number of academic papers on the subject, and has served as the Associate Director of Conservation for the National Audubon Society.]

After completing his studies, Vincent returned to the East Coast, where he now has a day job developing marketing strategies and integrated learning solutions for pharmaceutical and biological industries.

But after returning, even with the musical inertia he found in Montana, Vincent believed his musical abilities had reached a certain level and plateaued. "I remember in my teens taking some lessons with Danny Weiss, and figured I needed that objective perspective again." Two members of the New Jersey musical community—man-

dolinist Mike Madan and his bassist wife Linda—routinely held "phenomenal" picking parties, at which Vincent met (among others) Rolly Brown, Mark Cosgrove, and a guy who played a lot of Gypsy jazz guitar: John Carlini. "I was inspired by his holistic approach to the fretboard and his ability to converge musical genres, from bluegrass to bebop, " Vincent remarks.

Vincent asked John to take him as a student, and John Carlini "began opening my eyes, helping me to move away from a lick-based approach to music to understanding the dynamics of the music itself. I had to become humble, to realize that I knew only what I knew. I had to develop humility so that I could focus on the ensemble and how to contribute to it and fit within the dynamics an ensemble creates. That also helped open me up to the abundance of stuff to learn. John taught me that playing guitar, whether practicing or performing, is a journey rather than an end in and of itself."

This same attitude filtered into Vincent's relationships with his students. "As a technical assistant in graduate school, I found out quickly that the best way to learn is to teach. It keeps you alert and on your toes. Just as John is helping me, I'm trying to help my guitar students move past the artist-emulating lick vocabulary into the voice that's their own. It's a continuing exploration." When asked what happens when he realizes that a student is approaching the skills of the teacher, Vincent laughs. "Students typically know, if they're good, when the time has come to move along. It only means I've done my job as a teacher."

After playing in several bands (including Avalanche, with Gene Lowinger and the previously mentioned Mike and Linda Madan), Vincent is now part of CrossTown, an acoustic band that plays swing and bluegrass, balancing between progressive and traditional aspects of each music. Vincent provides rhythm guitar, lead, and vocals, and has begun writing again. "I wrote most of the music and lyrics when I was playing rock, but it's a little different, for me, with acoustic music. As an artist, I don't readily identify with the blue-eyed darlin' waiting at the end of the lane by the log cabin home. But I have my own personal relationships and frustrations as they relate to daily living, my family, my fiancée Jaymie, and I also have ongoing concerns about conservation and the environment. If you look at the classic bluegrass songs, there are some of the same themes. We're just trying to expand the genre out here in the first part of the 21st century. Right now I'm working on a jazz version of 'Blue Moon of Kentucky,'" he laughs. "I guess that's the Carlini influence. But it's all part of the same effort."

Until CrossTown comes out with their CD next year, Vincent has tabbed out his solo on a version of the tune "Travelin' Down This Lonesome Road," which they may include in that project.

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine pays tribute to

Doc Watson, Merle Watson & Jack Lawrence

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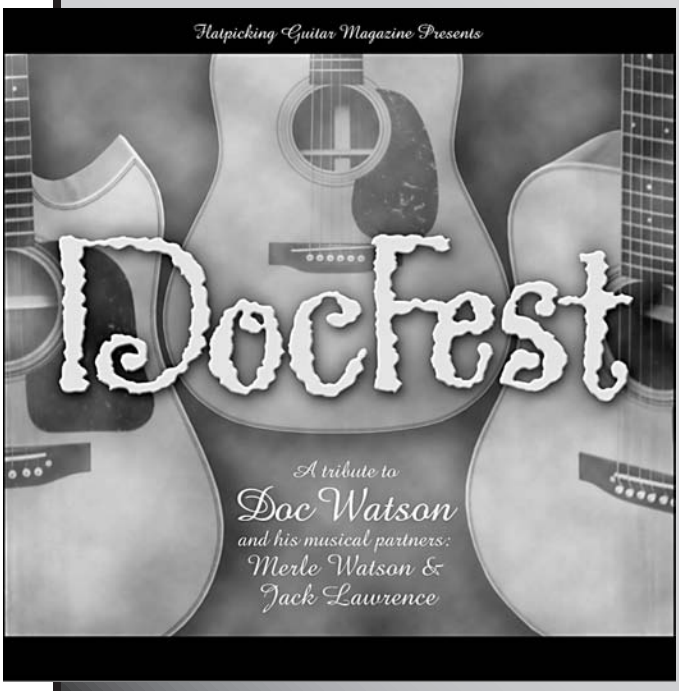

Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar (Doug Rorrer & Steve Kilby)
Reuben's Train (Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally)
Old Camp Meeting Time (Kenny & Amanda Smith)
Deep River Blues (Jim Hurst & Missy Raines)
Salt Creek/Bill Cheathum (Wyatt Rice, Tim Stafford & Rushad Eggleston)
Alberta/Billy In The Lowground (Orrin Star & Russell Scholle)
Train That Carried My Girl From Town (Brad Davis & Whitewater)
Way Downtown (John Tindel & RST)
Cotton Eyed Joe (David Grier)
A-Roving On A Winter's Night (Chris & Sally Jones)
The Crawdad Song (Brad Davis & Dan Miller)
Rainbow (Steve Kaufman & Roy Curry)
Little Sadie (Adam Granger)
More Pretty Girls Than One (Craig Vance & Chris Leske)
Black Mountain Rag (Steve Pottier & Barry Soloman)
The Lone Journey (John McGann & Chris Moore)
Southbound (Joe Carr & Alan Munde)
Matty Groves (Larry Keel & Rushad Eggleston)

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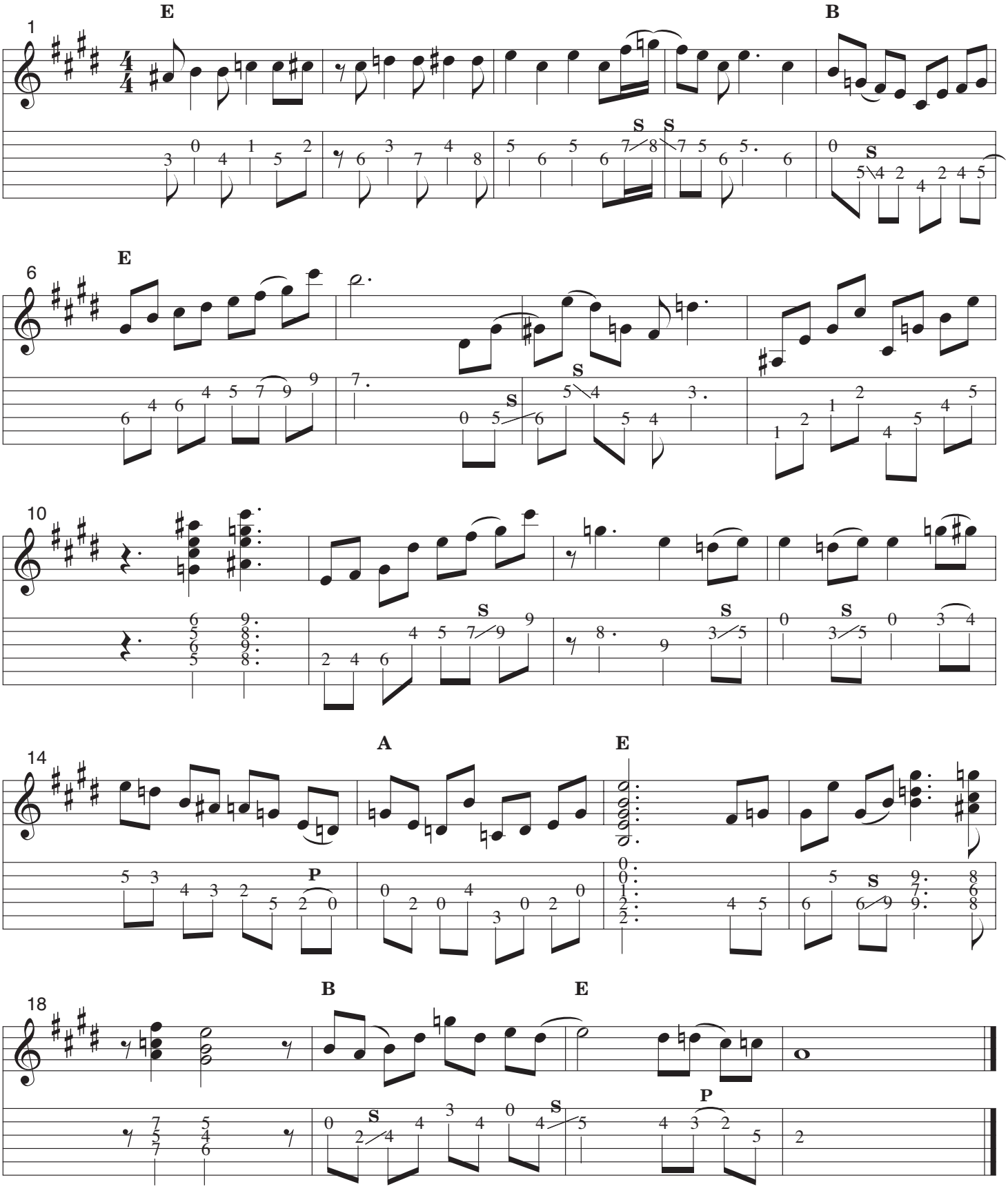
Audio CD
Track 18

Travelin' Down This Lonesome Road

Arranged by Vincent Muehter-
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Luthier Jim Grainger

by Tres Indermark and Terry Barnes

The Gravel Road to Grainger's Repair and Restoration Guru Jim Grainger of Custom Fretted Instruments and Repair

Jim Grainger, the owner of Custom Fretted Instruments and Repair, literally is the "guru on the mountain." However, in this case, the mountain is a fifty-acre, heavily wooded piece of land on the Cumberland Plateau just south of Sparta, Tennessee. There, at the end of a steep and winding gravel road, Jim and his able assistants—Steve Moore; his son, Doug Grainger; and inlay artist Joyce Carroll—tirelessly repair countless acoustic (and electric) instruments and, like Victor Frankenstein, have restored to life many an old Martin "cannon." Jim's shop in the woods truly is a refuge from the hustle and bustle of today's busy world, and also is a great place to look at wonderful guitars, pick a tune, or just swap stories. Few people have better stories (or a broader depth of knowledge about acoustic guitars) than Jim, who also is one heck of a nice guy and truly one of the few people who can be entrusted to work on a pre-war Martin or Gibson without worry.

Jim Grainger has been building, restoring, and repairing musical instruments longer than many of today's players and builders have been alive. Jim did his first instrument repair as a teenager in Chattanooga, Tennessee in the late 1950s when he refinished an old Kay banjo with leftover materials his father had used to refinish the kitchen table. Shortly thereafter, a neighbor (who had seen Jim working on the banjo) gave Jim a Martin 00-17 with a damaged top that she had planned to throw away. Jim promptly set to repairing this Martin, using every tool at his disposal, including placing the guitar under the leg of his bed as a makeshift clamp. After completing the structural repairs on this guitar, Jim decided to refinish this guitar. Wanting to improve on the refinishing job he did on the banjo, he went to the library and checked out every book he could find about finishing. One book told him that many instruments are finished with lacquer, so Jim went to the paint store and bought all the supplies recommended by the book. Using a spray gun his father had used to paint an old car, Jim followed the directions in his library book step-by-step. Finally, he now needed only to replace some missing fingerboard dots. He called a music store, which directed him to a local Chattanooga man who did inlay work. This man told Jim to bring over his guitar. After inspecting the guitar, he told Jim he could easily replace the dots, and asked if the guitar had been refinished. Jim said it had and the man asked who had done the work. Jim replied "I did." The man said "You're just the guy I've been looking for!" This statement changed the course of Jim's life because the man was Mike Longworth, who later would gain fame as Martin Guitar Company's official historian and pearl inlay specialist.

Thus began a long relationship between Jim and Mike Longworth, who, at the time, had been doing inlay work for many famous musicians such as Lester Flatt. Together Jim and Mike converted many 28-style Martins to 45-style guitars (Martin had discontinued the 45 series at the beginning of World War II and the 45-style was in great demand.) Jim and Mike also continued to do repair work, with Mike doing the inlay and binding and Jim the structural repairs and finishing work. During this time, Jim also began to build banjo necks, which he and Mike used to convert four string banjos to five string banjos. While taking a woodshop class at Middle Tennessee State University, Jim decided to make a copy of a 1902 Gibson F-2 mandolin (now in the Country Music Hall of Fame) that he and Mike were repairing. Jim decided, however, to place a banjo neck on the mandolin, thus creating the infamous "Bandola," which Jim still plays to this day. Not only did Jim get an "A" for this project in his class at MTSU, but received an unintended compliment when, at the 1966 Asheville Folk Festival, the Bandola fooled the practiced eye of George Gruhn who was heard complaining that Jim had ruined a nice old Gibson mandolin by sticking a banjo neck on it!

In 1966, Jim entered the U.S. Army, where he continued to do some repair work using the woodshops that are located on most Army bases. While stationed in Germany, he met a classical guitar builder who was interested in learning about Jim's experience building steel-string guitars. Jim in turn learned from this gentleman the art of tap-tuning, a technique builders use to evaluate the potential sound of a guitar by tapping the wood and listening for a particular sound or characteristic. At first unsure about this method, Jim learned under the tutelage of the German builder to recognize the benefits of tap tuning and

came to understand what to listen for, a skill he uses to great benefit today. It is one of those "ah ha" moments where Jim says he gained true insight into instrument construction and sound.

After Jim was discharged from the Army, Mike Longworth (who in the interim had been hired by Martin Guitars to do the pearl inlay work on their reintroduced 45 series guitars) asked Jim to come to work with him at Martin. Jim declined the job offer, but still continued to work with Mike. Jim recalls one time when Mike spirited two fully braced, soon-to-be D-45 tops out of the Martin factory and, with Jim tagging along, took the tops to an elderly gentleman who had been in charge of voicing the tops at Martin in the 30s and 40s when Martin scalloped their top braces (Martin ceased scalloping their tops in 1944). Again, by watching this gentleman's practiced hands as he carefully scalloped and voiced these tops, and by being allowed to do some of the scallop work himself, Jim gained valuable knowledge about the craft of building acoustic guitars. Jim and Mike then stealthily returned these tops to the Martin factory where they became D-45's for two of Mike's friends.

After graduating from college, Jim worked full-time in the furniture building industry and continued to repair, build, and restore many guitars part-time out of his basement. Eventually, word-of-mouth advertising brought him so much work that his part-time repair job began to consume all his free time, requiring him to work nonstop from the time he returned home from work until bedtime. Finally, in June of 1989, with a backlog of approximately eight months of repair work, Jim quit his job to devote himself full time to instrument building, repair and restoration, opening Custom Fretted Instruments and Repair.

Jim is a hard man to impress when it comes to guitars, having seen and played them all. In fact, many an owner of a nice old D-18 or D-28 may be deflated to hear Jim strum their guitar and pronounce simply, "Yup, it's a Martin." However, Jim thoroughly enjoys comparing guitars, and especially performing A/B comparisons of older Martins and Gibsons with the newer generation of quality, handmade guitars like Huss & Dalton (for whom Jim is a dealer). In Jim's experience, many of the newer hand-built guitars can be so close to the older Martins and Gibsons that it is hard to justify the price of a pre-war guitar. In Jim's opinion, this is truly "the golden age of acoustic guitar." However, Jim's pick for best guitar still is the old Gibson J-35, which many have labeled "the Banjo Killer." Of course, the mid thirties D-18s and D-28s are no slouches either, and Jim has repaired and played numerous examples. His own guitar is a 1954 D-28 that he bought for $100 in 1958. Jim and Mike Longworth also scalloped the braces on this guitar, which contributes to its marvelous sound.

Jim never knows what will come in his door on any given day because old Gibsons and Martins still do trickle out of the Tennessee mountains. Recently a 14-year-old girl brought in a guitar previously owned by the late husband of a family friend. The friend had given the girl this guitar to learn on. The girl had brought the guitar to Jim to inquire about fixing a crack in the bridge. Another repairman had told her that the guitar was beyond help and had offered her $200 for it (a tempting offer, but she declined). Opening the case, Jim was greeted by a remarkably clean, sunburst 1936 D-18. Needless to say, the girl left Jim's shop with a much greater appreciation of what she had and, after fixing the bridge, Jim returned the guitar to her with the stern admonition that this was not a guitar to "practice on" at school!

In addition to his many repair and restoration projects, which include neck sets, refrets, refinishing jobs, custom fabrications, re-tops, and other structural repairs, Jim continues to build beautiful custom banjos, like the one played by Blake Williams while with Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, which resulted in Bill Monroe himself inviting Jim to dinner. Jim also continues to build custom guitars and the occasional hammered and mountain dulcimer and frequently can be found communicating his vast wealth of knowledge on internet posting boards like www.flatpickin.com and the Vintage Guitar Bulletin Board.

So when your guitar starts buzzing and it's time for a neck set, or if you need a good, bone saddle for maximum tone, send it up that Gravel Road to Grainger's and discover just how good your guitar can be.

Custom Fretted Instruments & Repair is located at 400 Firetower Road, Sparta, TN 38583-3746. Custom Fretted Instruments is an authorized warranty repair center for Martin, Fender, Taylor, Guild, and Ovation, and is a dealer for several high quality musical instruments including guitars made by Huss & Dalton , J.W. Gallagher & Son, and other manufacturers. Jim Grainger can be reached at (931)-657-2398 or via e-mail at customfret@blomand.net.

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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

BRAD DAVIS IS ENDORSED BY SIT STRINGS / TAKAMINE / CA GUITARS / ULTRASOUND AMPLIFIERS GRETSCH / FENDER / GIBSON / ERNIE BALL / MARTIN.

Bluegrass Cash

The music of Johnny Cash became a style in itself. The guitar licks and phrases that were born out of his music are very recognizable. They were simple, interesting, well thought-out, and captivating. There is no mistaking the sound that surrounded the voice of Johnny Cash. In this article I've tabbed out four licks. On the accompanying audio CD I've recorded them in standard Tennessee Three tempo and then slowed them down for further dissection. These licks sound simple but the mechanics are quite difficult to perform. You may already be familiar with these four.

As always, listen to the audio tracks until they become familiar, then read the tab and let your left hand learn the note map. Once your fingers know where to go, you're half-way there! Whether you're a bluegrass, country, or jazz guitarist, it would be a good idea to memorize these licks and use them as a basis for creating new licks and lick phrases. You never know how a good lick will inspire you to play and create new music. Have fun with these and good luck.

For more info on Brad Davis, see www.braddavismusic.com or www.fgmrecords.com. For management information, see www.acousticmusicmanagement.com

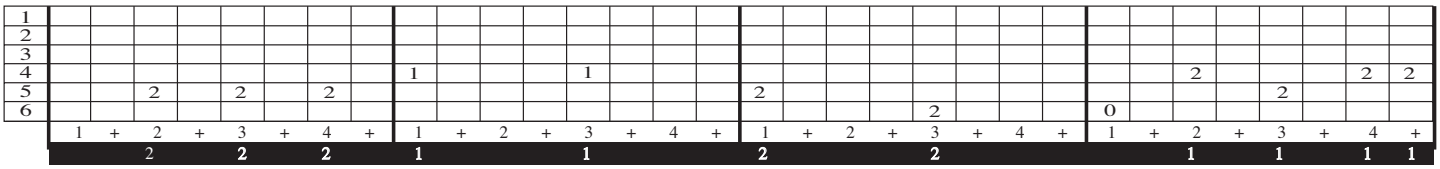
Audio CD Tracks 19-29

Key-E

BLUEGRASS CASH

CASH lick #1

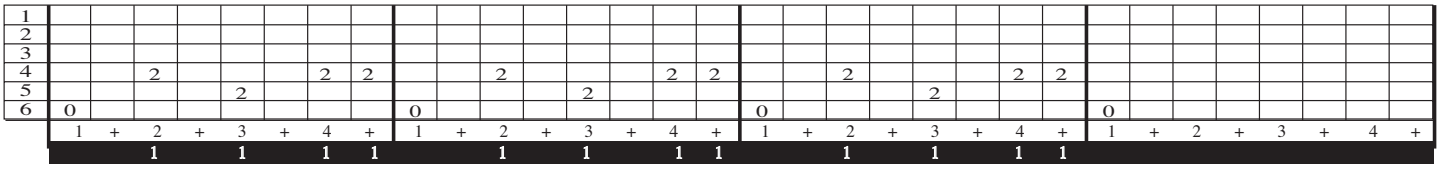
BEND



Key-E

CASH lick #1cont

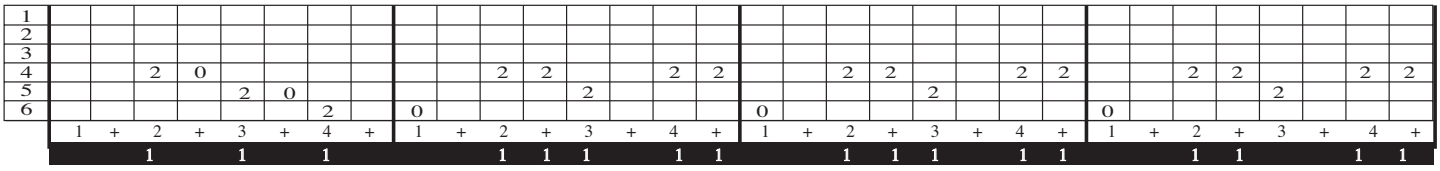
the end.



Key-E

CASH lick #2

BEND



Key-E

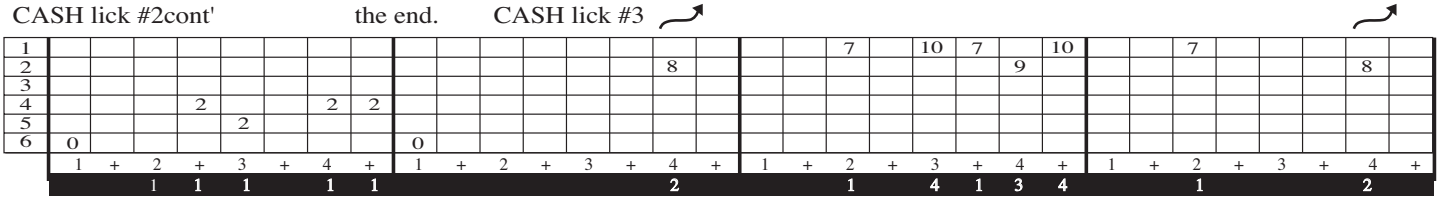
CASH lick #2cont'

the end.

CASH lick #3

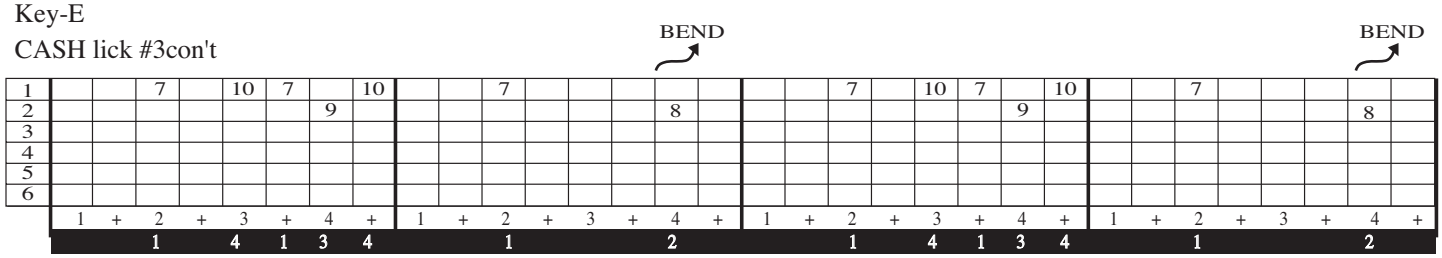
BEND

BEND



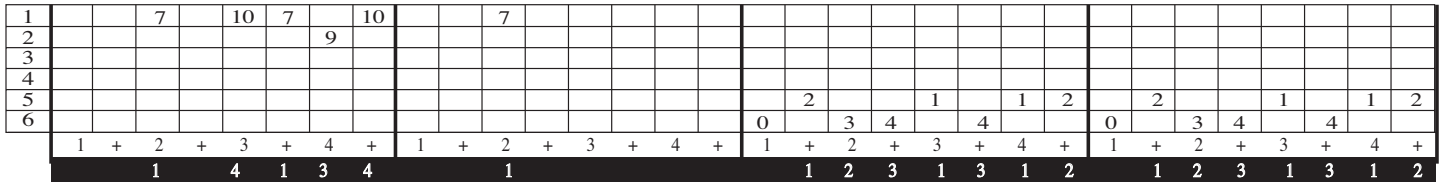
Key-E

CASH lick #3con't



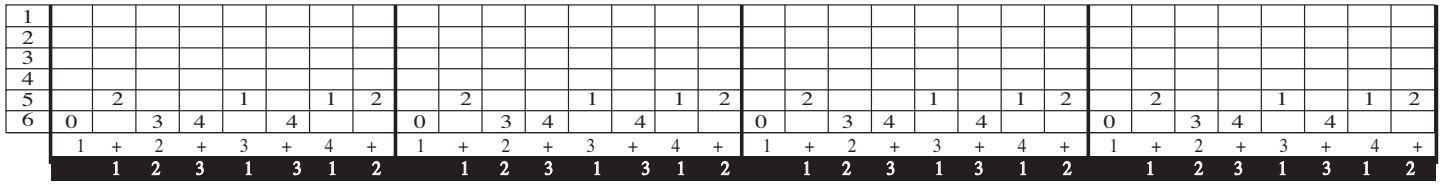
Key-E

CASH lick #3con't the end. CASH lick #4 This lick repeats over and over again. the end.



Key-E

CASH lick #5 E E E



Key-A

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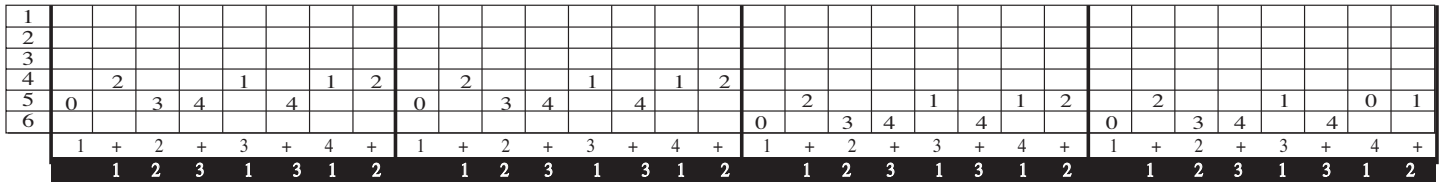

Key-E

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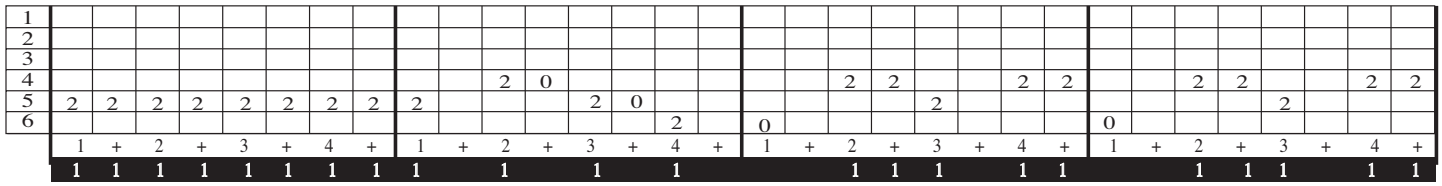

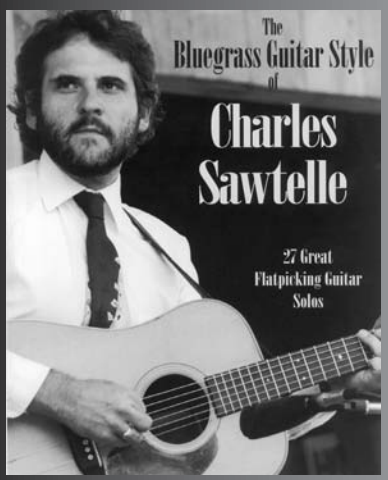

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Gypsy Jazz Guitar

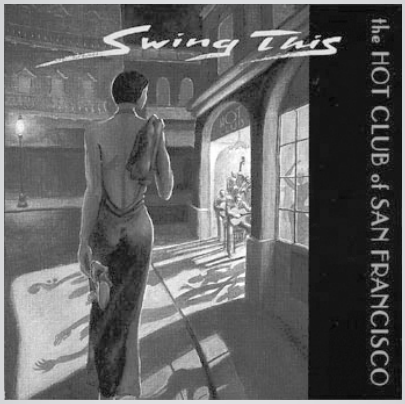
by Paul Mehling

Thinking Like a Violinist

One of the qualities that separates Django's style of guitar playing from the more common styles of jazz guitar is the expressiveness in his tone and touch. When you compare a Django solo with solos from other guitarists of the time (such as Charlie Christian or Eddie Lang), Django's contemporaries exhibit a noticeable lack of vocal-like qualities (those things we call expressiveness).

Django played the violin (and most of the stringed instruments) and was intimately familiar with violin music; that's clearly evident in his playing. You may or may not have the time to take up the violin and/or immerse yourself in the literature associated with that instrument, so this month we'll shine some light on things you can learn from violin players.

The Hot Club of San Francisco



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Having spent a good many years trying to get that Grappelli sound on violin, I discovered that a violinist works extremely long and hard to be able to play even the smallest amount of music. Guitarists can just pick up a few chords and play (after a brief period of waiting for the fingertips to stop hurting). With the violin, there's terrible scratching and out-of-tune scales and (worst of all) no frets to help you find the notes! But that liability is also a benefit when you're sliding around getting those slurs and slides that can make a simple melodic line break your heart.

Think of your vocal cords as a single string. Picture it: your throat has no frets, no fret markers, no dots, nothing. But somehow you can sing notes (some of us not as well as others). If you were a violinist, you'd be taught to play a bunch of scales on JUST ONE STRING, so that you start relating to the rise and fall of notes in much the same way you learned to sing and speak. It's easier on guitar, because we have frets. But it's still hugely difficult (at first) to play a scale on just ONE STRING with JUST ONE FINGER. Try it. Go slow.

You can start with an open string and go up from there. It may be easier if you close your eyes and try it. You may find that you are hearing it better before you play the next note with your eyes closed—that's a great thing because you're discovering your inner ear. That's where the music is inside you. Not in your head, not in your fingers, but in your inner ear.

So, now you're playing scales on all six strings of your guitar, one string at a time. Once you've explored the E, A, D, G, B, E scales, now try the same thing starting on the first fretted note of each string: F, Bb, Eb, Ab, C, F . A little harder, but not much. You get the idea.

You probably will hear a slide or a "slurp" between each note as you move your left hand from note to note. This is good! It's the vocal quality we're looking for! You can either keep your left hand finger down (try it with all the different fingers) for maximum slurp or you can lift the finger as you slide (shift) to dampen the slurp. It seems so easy now that you've discovered it, no?

So, now try playing some arpeggios (I know, I know, I'm a sadist) on one string. Ascending (going up) and descending (duh, going down!) and see how hard or easy that is for you.

Okay, still looking for some growth opportunities? Try doing octaves on one string (say, F on the E string at the first fret all the way up to F on the E string at the 13th fret). Believe me, I'm not making this up. Violinists have to do all of this stuff (and more) and it is hard, weird work. But it pays off in the final result of being able to make music that touches people.

Once you've more or less mastered the technical stuff of scales and arpeggios you can go on to using this in your melodies. See where it's most effective. Use it everywhere you can at first and then once you've really gotten tired of hearing it all over the place, let your ear be your guide. This is called taste, and you can never have too much of it. Develop your inner ear and follow it; that's your true musical self.

Your last task: for extra credit (increased musicianship), listen to every singer you hear now and see how much portamento (slurping) they use between notes. Some singers really work this trick, some not at all. This thing called expressiveness often defines a singer's style (think Patsy Cline or Billie Holliday). Once your ear gets accustomed to hearing the slurping (portamento) you'll start to hear it (or NOT hear it and miss it) in guitar players (did I mention Charlie Christian and Eddie Lang?).

Slurping is not just for trombone players anymore.

Paul Mehling (aka Pazzo) is the leader of the notorious Hot Club of San Francisco, with seven CDs in 11 years and constant appearances all over the planet. On the music scene in Northern California all of his life, his dedication to jazz, especially Gypsy-Swing has is some small way, hopefully made the world a safer place for music. See www.HCSF.com

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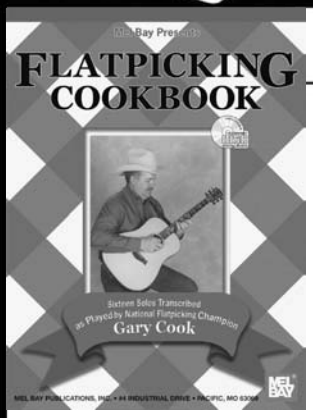

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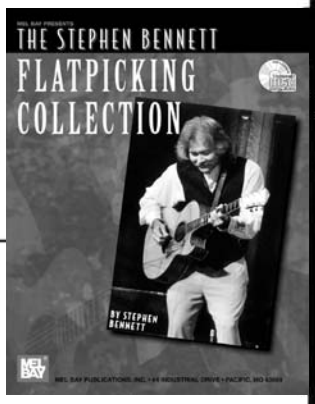

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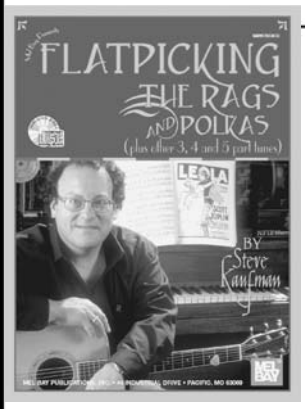

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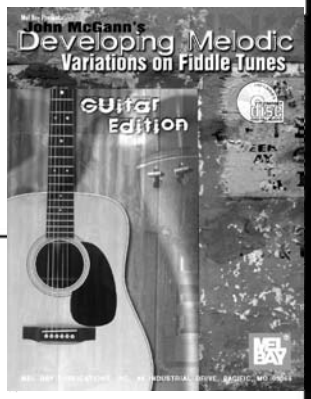

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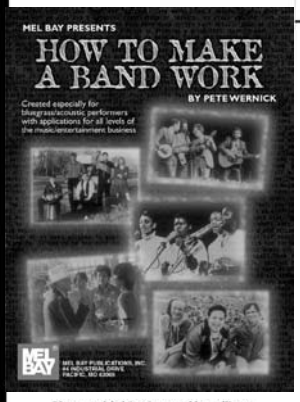

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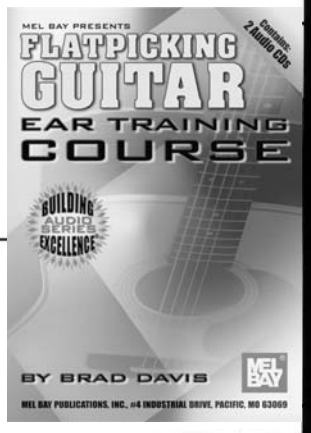

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Flowers of Edinburgh

This lilting, loping tune with a decidedly Celtic flavor is a recent favorite. I've been playing it at all of my shows the past few months and I just love the stately dignified interaction between the melody and the chords. (I perform it in a medley with "Lonesome Fiddle Blues" and plan to include it on a new live CD that my trio is now working on.)

Perhaps the most noteworthy thing about this arrangement (which is based on the arrangement in the Mandolin Player's Fakebook) is the choice to "float" some of the A part's melody lines: to employ select higher fret positions in combination with open strings rather than playing it more in a more linear way.

Why do this? Because the extra sustain or ring on certain notes that "floating" provides can be more pleasing than playing it straight. Why did I choose those particular notes to float and not others? Because I thought it sounded best that way. Floating—like crosspicking—is not an all-or-nothing proposition; sometimes it works best in cameo rather than as full Monty.

To take you behind the scenes here at Star Brain Ranch, when I first started arranging this tune I tried floating the entire A part, and it actually worked (sometimes it doesn't) and sounded pretty good. But I ultimately decided that I preferred the more grounded feel of a mostly-first-position approach to the tune. Yet I'm going to include a tab for the floated A part so that you can experience floating in its purest form and also get a sense of how it influenced my arrangement even though I chose to include only a small piece of it.

Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion and is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. *See www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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Flowers of Edinburgh

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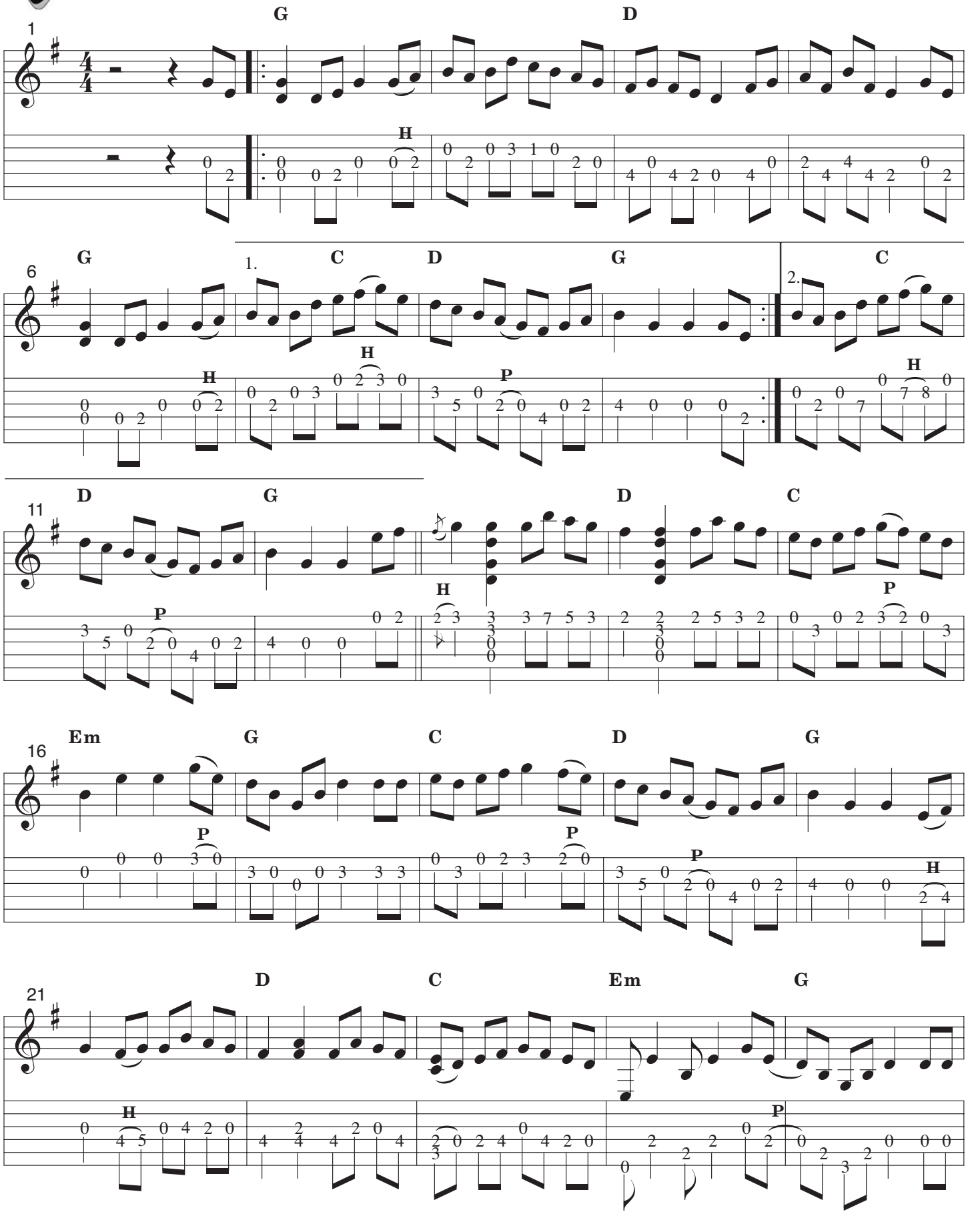
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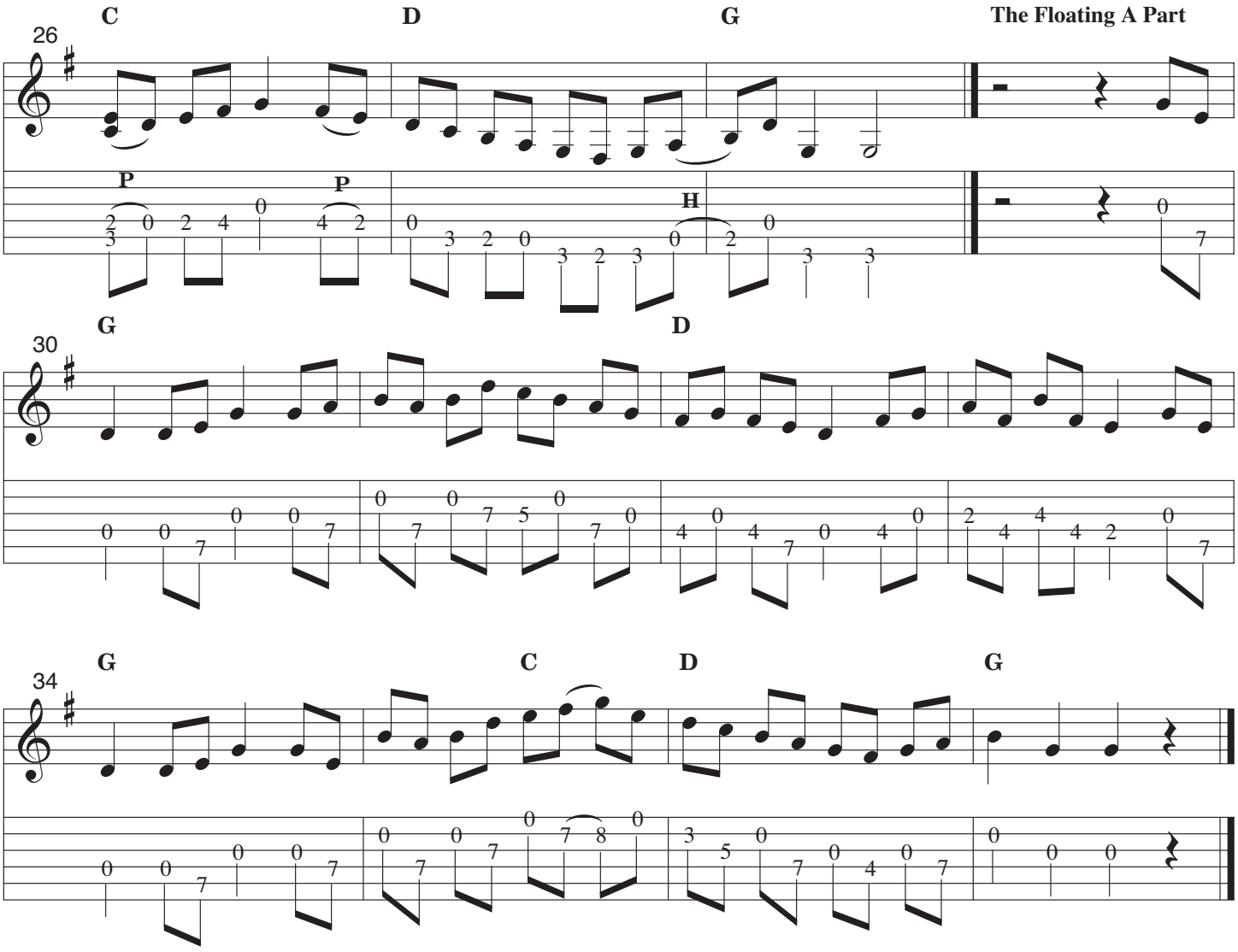
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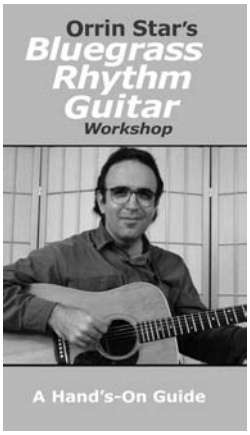
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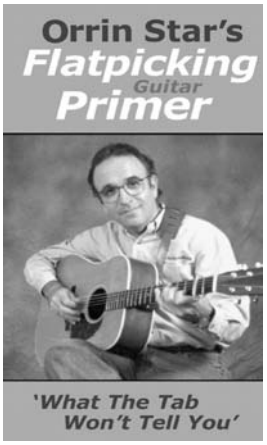

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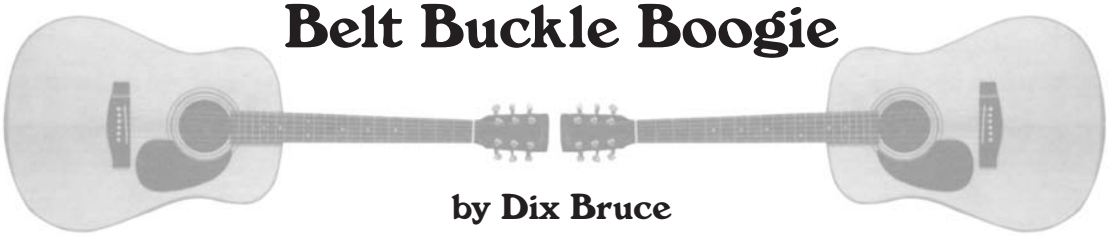


by Dix Bruce

My recent column about belts and buckles got more response than anything I've ever written for *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. I guess it had a universal appeal since we all have to keep our pants up without scratching our guitars. Or possibly it was my deathless prose...NAAAAAAHHHHH!

The most interesting response was from Larry Bowen, a guitarist and artist who's worked in leather for over thirty years. He claimed to have the perfect solution to my belt problems: his "scratchless picker's belt." He said the belt had no buckle as such and that the only surface that touches you or the guitar is leather. He offered to send me one and guaranteed that it would be even hipper than my eagle motif belt.

Larry followed through and sent me his "scratchless picker's belt." It's good looking and well made, as you can see in the photo below. Very sleek with clean lines.

Instead of a buckle, it has a little hook on the back (the side away from the guitar) that fits into the holes on the other end of the belt.

On the hook side of the "non-buckle" Larry added a piece of leather reinforcement and, apparently not one to waste space, slit it to make a pocket for picks. If you keep a spare pick in there, you'll never be without one, at least as long as you wear the belt. You will have to loosen it a bit to get at the picks, but Larry assures me that even the most serious and distracted flatpicker can retrieve a pick without dropping their pants!

I took the belt for a test drive that night on a gig and it worked fine. So well, in fact, that I forgot I had it on. No noises, no scratching, no problem. It's 1 3/8" wide so it fits well in both blue jeans and slacks belt loops.

When he's not flatpicking his guitar, Larry Bowen makes wallets, coin purses, belts, holsters, instrument straps, hats, and handbags which he sells at fairs and craft shows. If you're interested in one of his "scratchless picker's belt," drop him a line c/o Contrad Leather, 955 Wertzville Rd., Enola, PA 17025. It's a great product, functional and nice looking. Thanks Larry!

As I've often mentioned, it's good to be able to play in any key—and not just by playing in C or G and moving the capo around the fingerboard. The guitar has a whole range of sounds and timbres that different chords, positions and keys provide. If you don't learn how to use them you're missing out on a world of great colors and tones. Let's look at a boogie-woogie riff in the key of E that makes good use of the open sixth string, the lowest note on a standard tuned guitar. I call the tune "Belt Buckle Boogie" in honor of our present subject. It'll get us a little deeper into boogie and pick up where my recent "Ear Training" column and riff left off.

Classic boogie-woogie is kind of the love child of blues and ragtime. I've always enjoyed playing riffs or solos because they have such great grooves and audiences always seem to respond to them. I included a fun boogie tune in my *BackUP TRAX: Basic Blues for Guitar* called "Rockabilly Boogie."

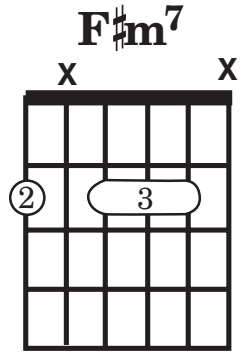
The melody starts out with three bent or stretched notes, kind of like the famous beginning to the lead guitar part played by Bill Kirchen on Commander Cody's "Hot Rod Lincoln." Have your fretting hand poised in something that approximates an E chord. Use your second finger (noted in the music with a small "2" between the standard notation and the tablature staves) to fret the second fret of the 6th string. As you pick the note, stretch the 6th string toward the middle of the fingerboard to get that funky bent string sound. You'll bend this string again in measures 11 – 13.

Even more prevalent than the bent string sound is the triplet in just about every measure, beginning with the first full measure. Rhythmically you're playing three eighth notes over one beat, in the space you usually play only two eighth notes or one quarter note. We count the notes in measure one this way: "One and two and three and one-two-three." The good news is that you won't have to pick three notes in rapid succession. Instead you'll pick the first, hammer-on the second, then pick the third. Fret the first two notes of the triplet as shown with your first and second fingers; the third note is on the open 4th string.

The basic riff is only one measure in length. It repeats in measures two, three, and four, which is a typical boogie-woogie pattern. In measure five you simply move the whole riff over one string, start it on string five, and play it two times over the A chord. You should be able to do this from memory, especially if you've memorized the

feel and look of the riff over the E chord. In measure seven it's back to the original riff over the E chord twice more.

In measure 10 I added a chordal variation to the typical boogie-woogie progression. Normally you'd play a V chord here (n this case a B7), but I substituted a ii ("two minor") or an F#m7 instead. Here's the F# minor chord:



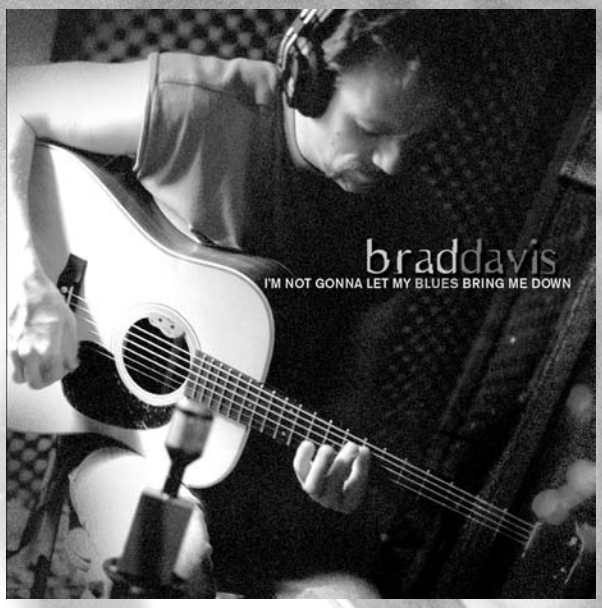
It's a four string chord with strings one and five muted. You may have seen this chord form in one of my swing/jazz columns.

The riff changes over the F#m7 and wraps itself up with yet a third riff in measures twelve and thirteen. Take the first ending if you intend to play the melody again, take the second at the end of your melody or the end of the tune.

There's a nice lick in measure eleven that you can pull out of this tune and use in other tunes in E with a V—I (B7—E) chord change. As an added exercise, try moving the lick over one string so that the first note is on the fourth string, second fret E. This can be used over an E7—A chord change. Finally, move the lick over one more string to start on the third string, second fret A. This can be used over an A7—D chord change. See the examples on page 48. You could also start with the second measure of the lick, measure twelve, and use it over just the E or I chord. Ditto with the A and D versions of the lick.

Once you understand how the progression works, try plugging in your own riffs. As always, write your riffs down in a spiral bound music notebook so that they're easy to keep track of. You may need a boogie woogie tune some day!

Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally's "Brothers at Heart" by Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally is available online from http://www.musixnow.com You can preview sound clips from several of the songs. His BackUP TRAX: Basic Blues for Guitar with fourteen classic blues: Country and Urban Blues, Acoustic and Electric Blues, Delta Blues, Texas Blues, Chicago Blues, Slide Guitar Blues, Alternate Tuning, Traditional and Modern Blues is also available online. Preview sound clips at http://www.musixnow.com. Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.



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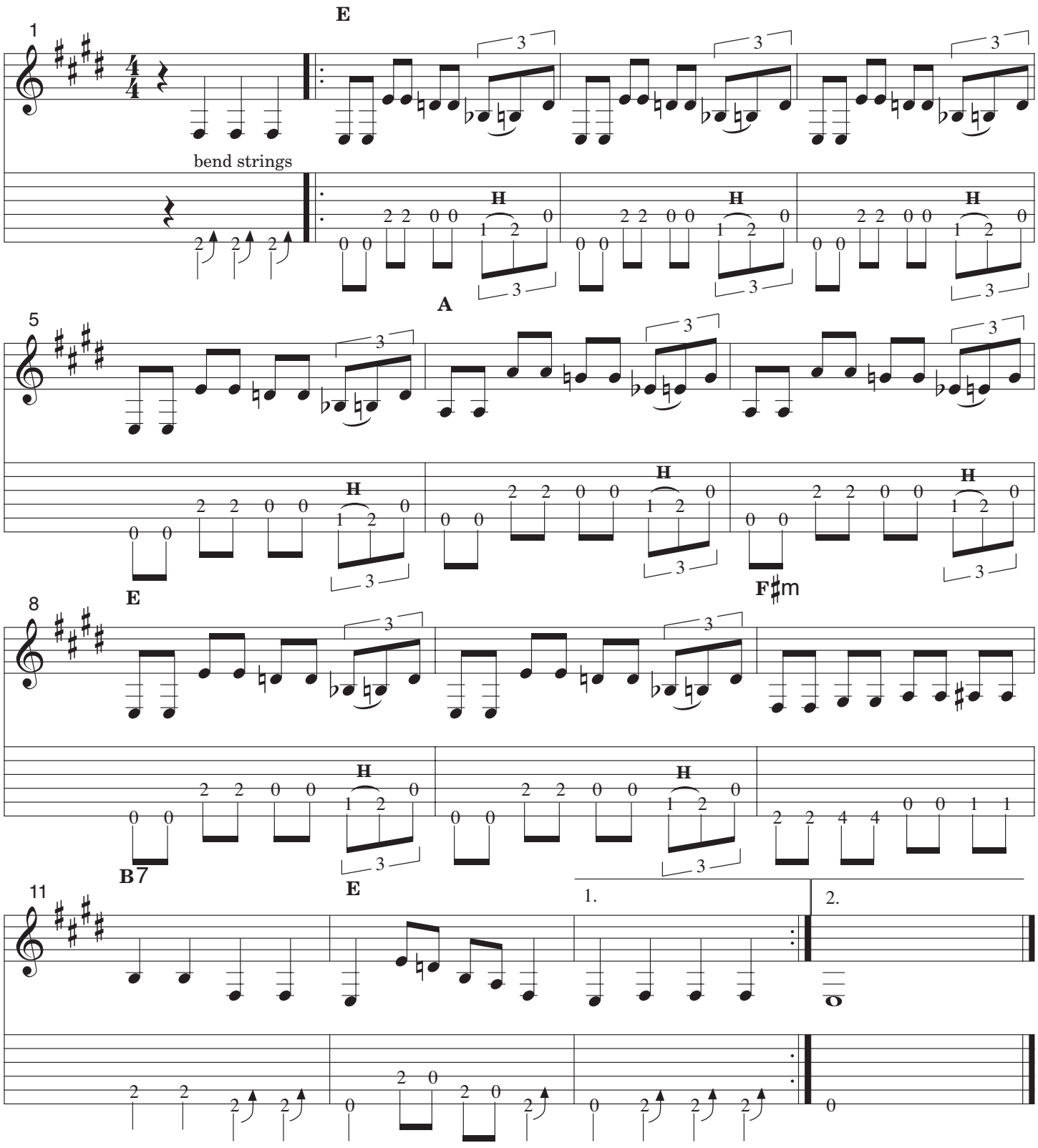
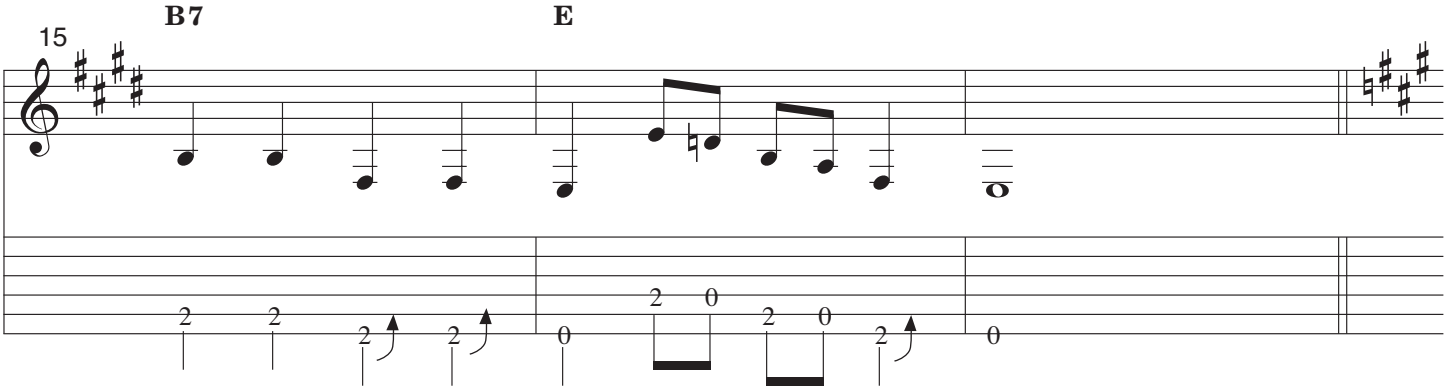
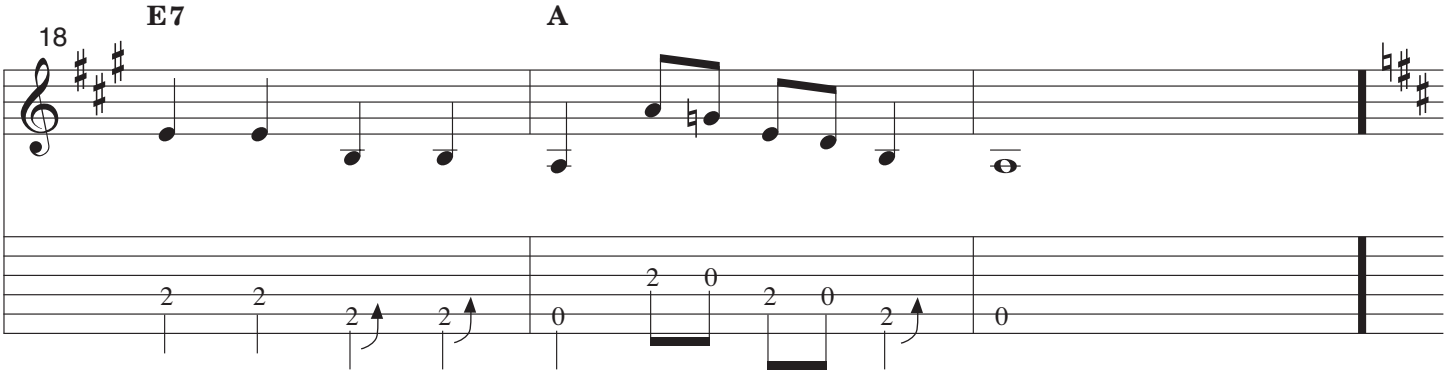
Belt Buckle Boogie

By Dix Bruce

Belt Buckle Licks

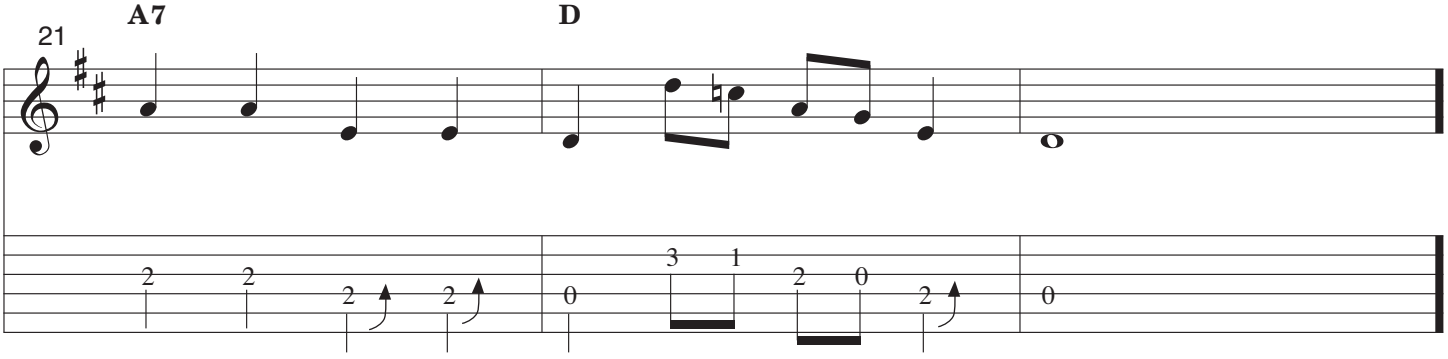
Lick from measure 10

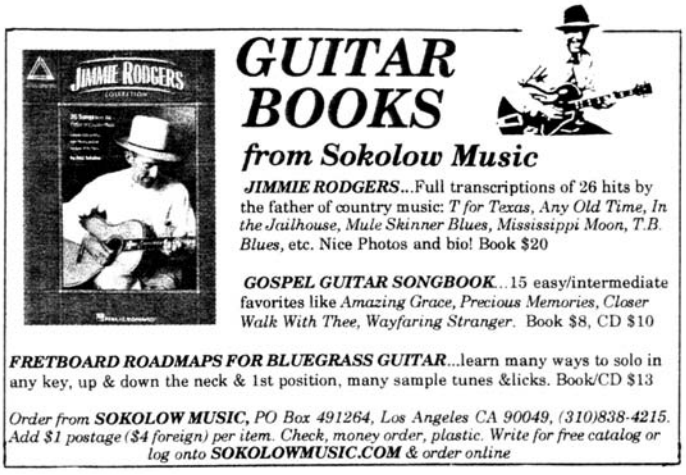


Lick moved one string



Lick moved two strings

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JAM TUNES

"Cherokee Shuffle" with Kenny Smith and Scott Fore

Last month FGM Records released a great new CD of standard flatpicking tunes called *Flatpicking Favorites: Hot & Spicy*. I felt like it would be interesting to provide Kenny Smith & Scott Fore's arrangement of the classic "Cherokee Shuffle" in this issue since you all had a chance to work on Steve Lewis' version in the last issue. This is one of those tunes that half the people play in D and the other half in G. We provided Steve's version in D in the Nov/Dec 2003 issue and so here you will get a chance to work on it in G. On Brad Davis' *Flatpick Jam Volume 3 DVD* we provide practice tracks for both keys. I usually don't like repeating tunes too much in the magazine, but since Steve's version was in a different key and this is such a great standard tune that all jam session players should know in both keys, I thought it would be nice to provide Kenny and Scott's great versions here. Besides, this is one of my all time favorite fiddle tunes!

We have transcribed both Kenny's and Scott's first solos on the recording. That should be enough to keep you busy for a while! Good luck!

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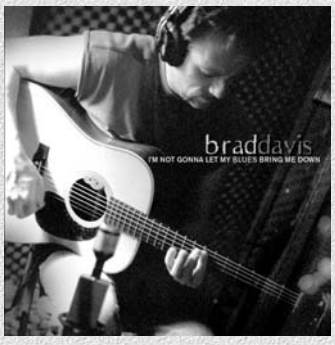

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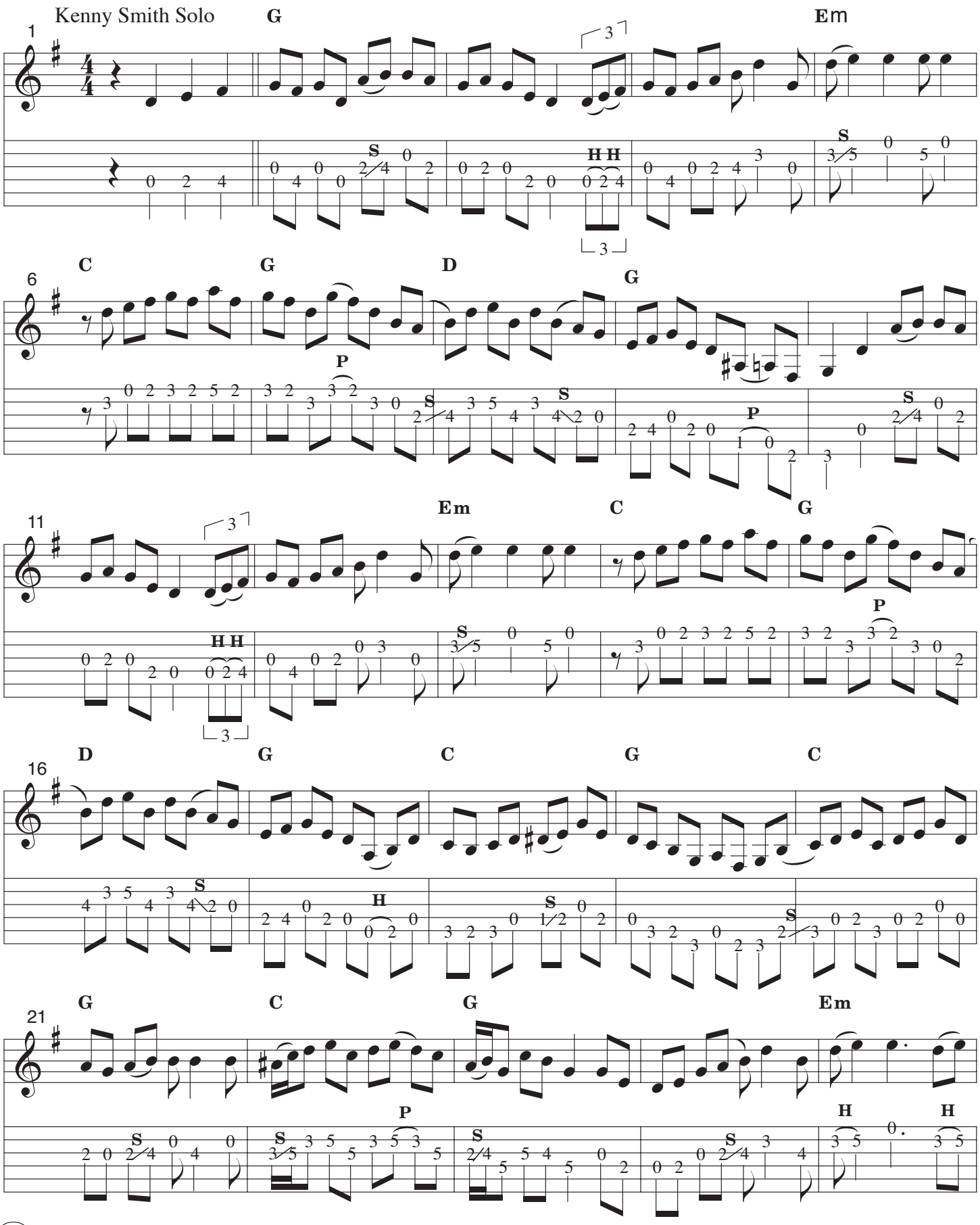
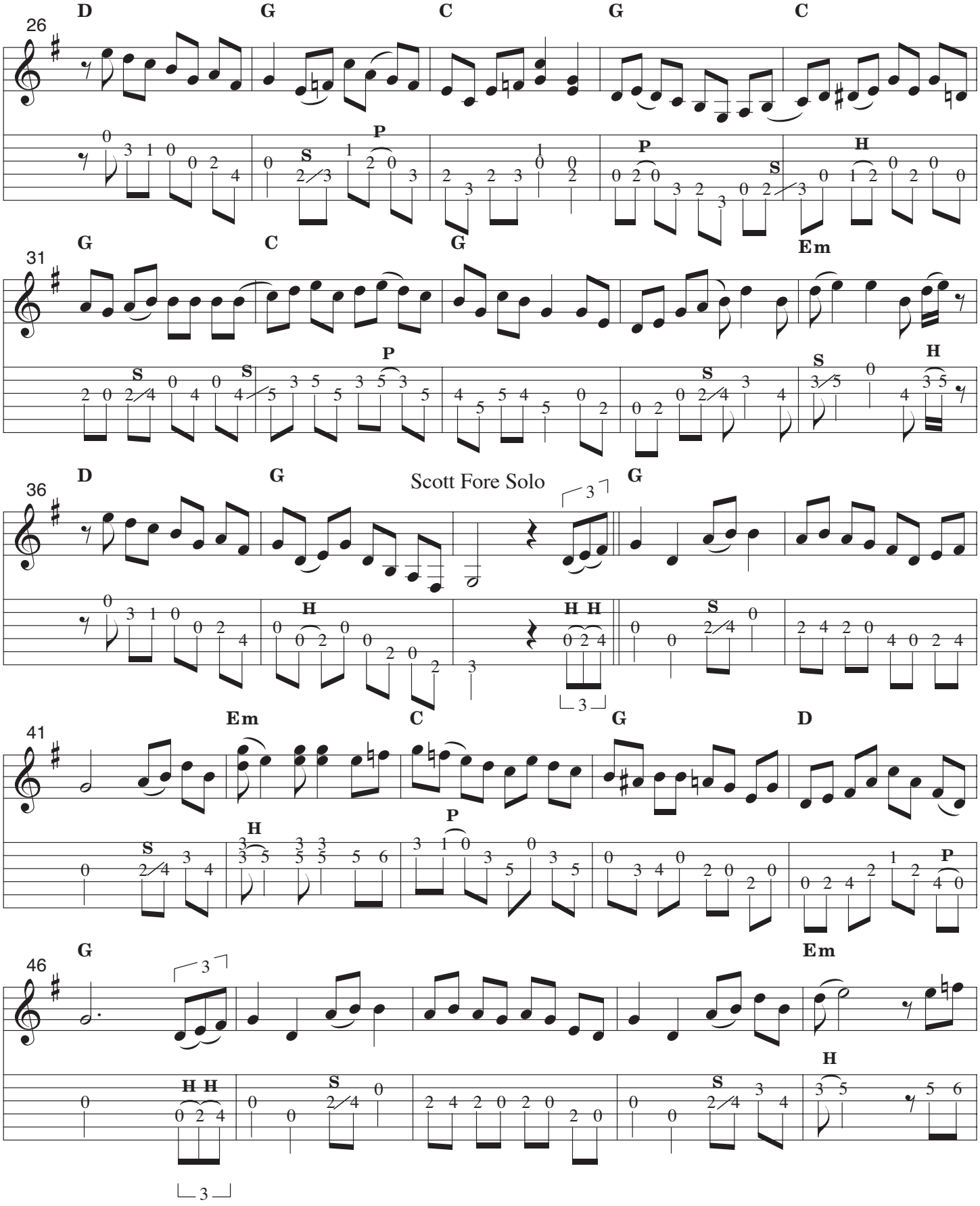
Cherokee Shuffle

Arranged by Kenny Smith
& Scott Fore
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Cherokee Shuffle (con't)

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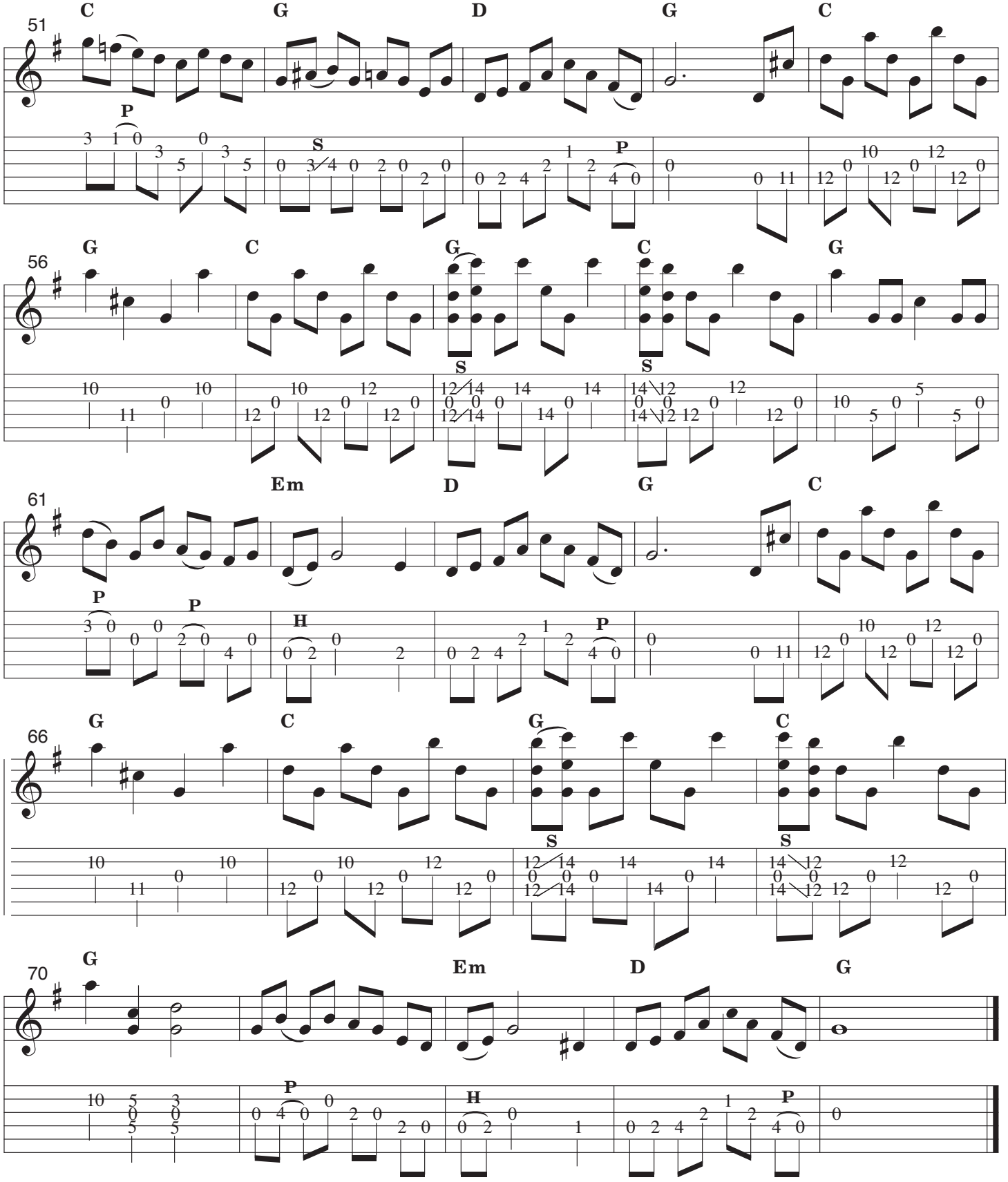

Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

In a Minor Mode

Today I want to get into some new territory. Some time ago we briefly discussed the differences between major and minor chords. Today we will review that discussion and press on with some minor key studies and a neat tune in a minor key that will add to your musical growth.

The Basic Triad

As a review, the basic triad—or three notes—in a major chord consists of the notes that represent the 1-3-5 of the scale degree. In the key of C, the eight notes of the octave are C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. Therefore, the notes that fall on 1-3-5 are C-E-G. Note that this 1-3-5 relationship is true for every key. In the key of D major, a 1-3-5 triad is D-F#-A; for the key of E the triad is E-G#-B; for F, the triad is F-A-C, and so on.

The minor triad differs from the major by only one note. The third note in the scale (also called the third scale degree or just the third) is flatted from the key signature. This makes it a minor third interval. The basic minor triad contains the scale steps 1-b3-5, so in the key of C minor the notes are C-Eb-G.

You will recall that we discussed the minor triad and inversions in the key of A minor. A minor is the relative minor to the key of C major. That means those two keys have the same key signature: no sharps or flats. It also means that you can use the same fingering as the C major scale (also called the Ionian mode) to play over an A minor chord.

The Origin of the Modes

The ancient Greeks, who contributed vast amounts of information to the classical world in the areas of science, art, music, literature, and philosophy, defined scales still used in music today.

The Golden Encyclopedia of Music says this about modes:

A Greek mode was made up of two tetrachords (four note groups) connected by a whole step. Each tetrachord contained two whole steps and one half step, but the way the whole and half steps were distributed varied from one mode to another.

Each mode had its own "ethos"—a moral value or inner meaning (and the origin of our word "ethics"). Plato, the philosopher, suggested that male students play and hear music only in the Dorian mode, which was manly and warlike.

The Lydian mode was considered suitable only for girls. The tendency to give meaning to a scale still exists today; thus many persons think a composition in a major key must be happy, and one in minor, sad.

You may be thinking, "Gee, Mike, that's great, but how does that help the modern flatpicker?"

You probably already play tunes that use the model scales, without realizing it. Some well-known tunes that use modes include "June Apple" (Mixolydian), "Old Joe Clark" (Mixolydian), Grisman's "Opus 57" (Aeolian), while some tunes move between a major and modal sound. For example, "Stoney Point" is G Major in the A section and uses E Aeolian in the B section.

For your reference, the modes are named Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian, corresponding to the seven scale degrees of the C major scale.

Bluegrass, Irish, and flatpicking music generally use the Ionian, Dorian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian modes; the rest of this discussion will focus on them.

Review of Major and Ionian Mode

The major scale in the key of C contains the notes C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. Note that the interval between the notes is two whole steps, one half step, three whole steps, and one half step. This is written as W-W-H-W-W-W-H.

The Ionian mode is identical to the C major scale, and has exactly the same notes and intervals.

The Dorian Mode

The Dorian mode uses the same fingering as the C major scale, but starts on the second scale degree, the D.

The notes in the Dorian scale are in the key of C major, but begin and end on a D: D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D. Notice that this is different from the D Major scale, which sharps the F and C notes (F# and C#). The intervals between the notes of the Dorian mode are W-H-W-W-W-H-W.

Mixolydian and Aeolian

Mixolydian mode is the C major scale starting on the fifth scale degree, which is a G. Notice when you play in this mode that it is similar to playing against a G7 chord because the F is natural to fit the key of C, rather than sharped as it would be in the key of G Major.

First position Aeolian mode uses the fingering of the C Major scale starting on the sixth scale degree. A scale that starts on the sixth tone in Western music is known as the relative minor.

The Aeolian mode is the same scale as the natural minor scale.

Exercise I uses these three scales; the C scale (the Ionian mode), the Dorian mode (fingered the same as the C Major scale starting on the D), and the Aeolian mode, (which you finger the same as C Major, starting on A).

Transposing the Modes

What about playing the modes in other keys? One way to understand and use the modes is to remember the note of the C scale on which the mode begins. The Dorian mode, using the key signature of C from D to D, can be thought of as beginning on the second tone of the C scale. To begin a Dorian on F, you can think, "D is the second tone of C, F is the second tone of Eb." The Dorian on F, therefore, is like playing the scale of Eb, starting on the second tone, the F.

For the exercises below, the fingerings should not give you any difficulty because of their similarity to the Ionian mode (the C Major scale) that you already know.

I want you to play these exercises 16 times without stopping. The modes have a different sound, and you need to repeat the scale to hear it!

Have a partner play Dm and C chords while you play Exercise II. Experiment with melodies using only the notes in the Dorian mode.

The Tune: "Left Bank"

"Left Bank" is a tune in the Dorian mode that I made up for this column. Experiment with the modal sound and have fun with it!

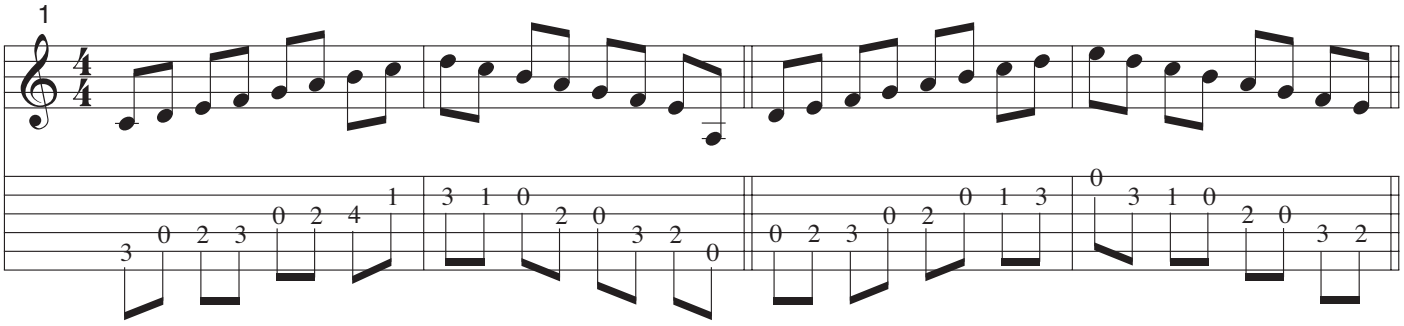
Hope to see you soon at one of our shows when you are in the Rockies.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

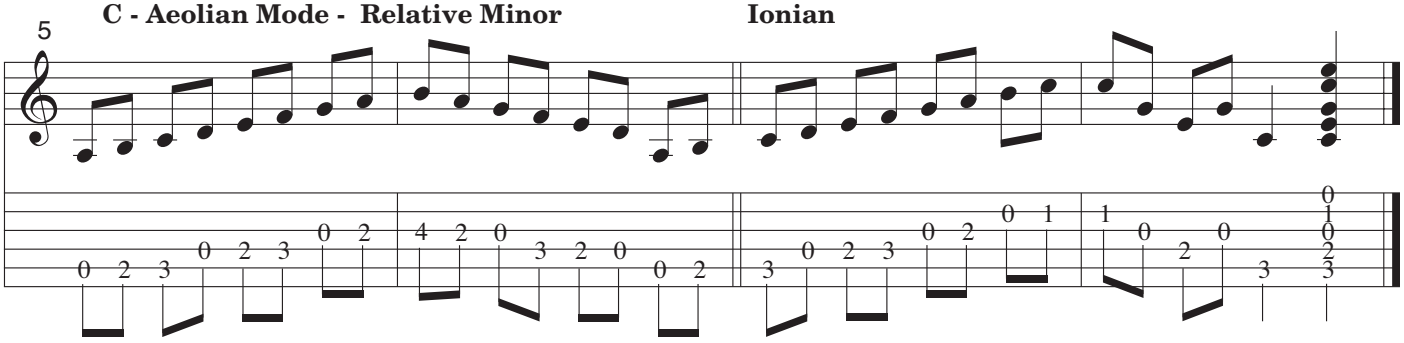
Audio CD
Tracks 42-43

Maddux Exercises

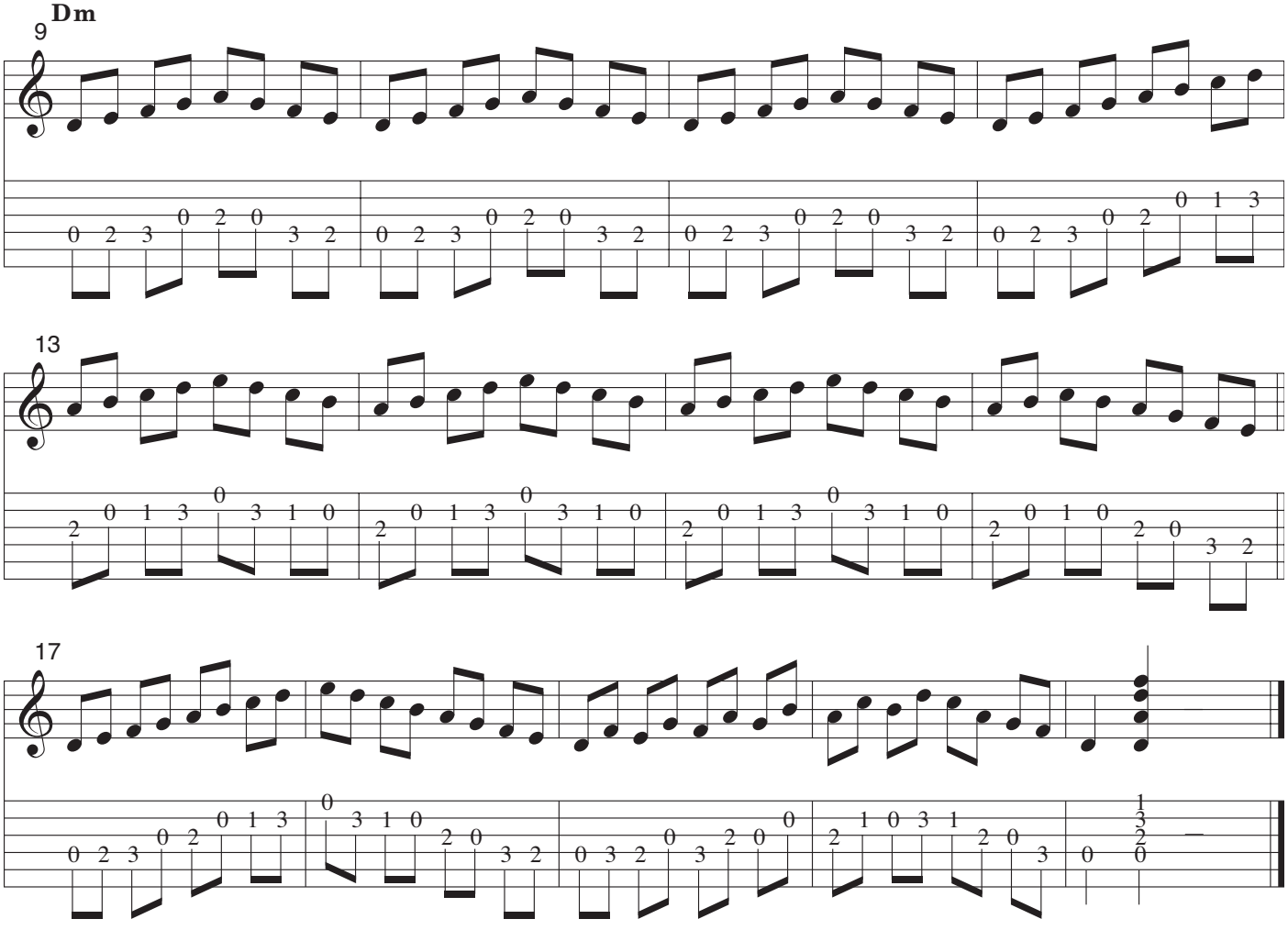
C Major - Ionian Mode **C - Dorian Mode**



C - Aeolian Mode - Relative Minor **Ionian**

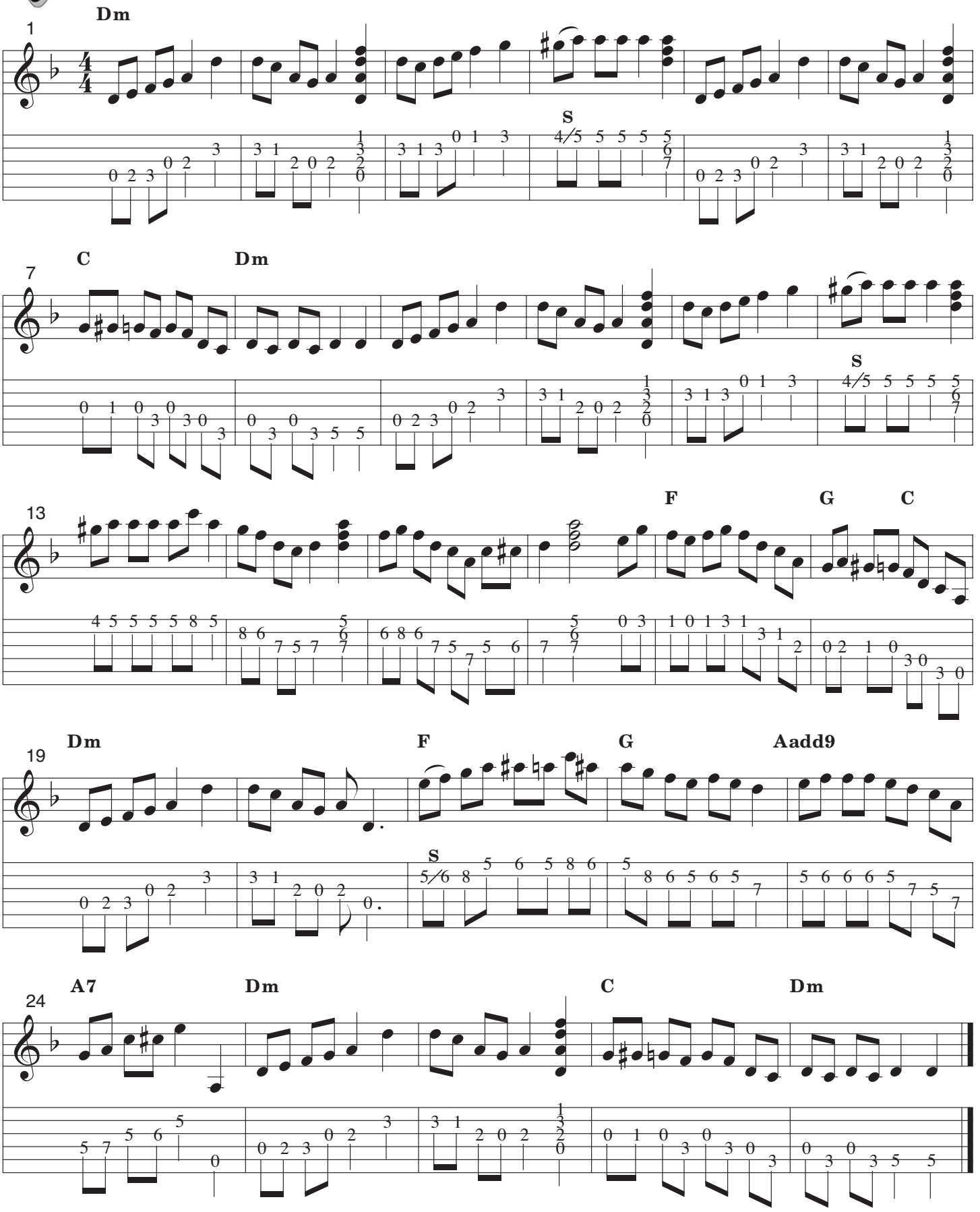


Exercise II - Dorian Exercise - Repeat [A] section 16 times without stopping.



Audio CD
Tracks 44-45

Left Bank

Written by Mike Maddux

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Man in the Middle

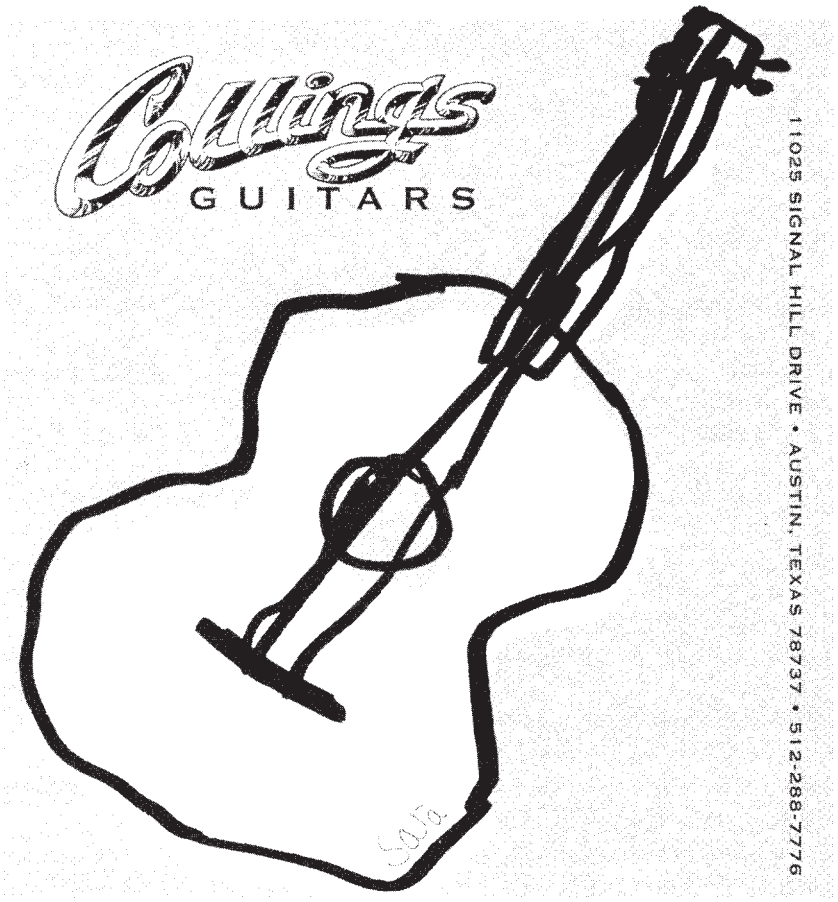
The gospel song this time around, "Man in the Middle." is a relatively recent one. Written by Thomas Harley Campbell in the late 70s, it's been a favorite of mine since the first time I heard it, and having recently come up with a fairly playable version, it seemed time to include it in this column. Even though the piece is only a little more than 30 years old, it's become a bluegrass gospel classic, as evidenced by the many groups who've recorded it. To my mind, the best recordings include a version by Hot Rize on their famous 1981 *Radio Boogie* album featuring Charles Sawtelle on guitar (originally on the Flying Fish label and since reissued on CD), another version by the Stanley Brothers, and a great version by a group here in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Cross.

In terms of tempo, I tend to favor the slower version of the piece as performed by Northern Cross (even though their recording doesn't include a guitar break). That's probably because I can't think (or play) as fast as I used to, and I need more time to digest lyrical messages. Speaking of messages, the lyrics of the chorus and the first verse of "Man in the Middle" are included here, along with a basic melody tab, in case you haven't heard the song before. Notice that Mr. Campbell got right to the point in the chorus by stating that the Man in the Middle was indeed Jesus. Overall, it's a beautifully written song, and if you're in need of the remaining lyrics, just log onto www.bluegrasslyrics.com.

Measures 30 - 37 consist of a partial transcription of Charles Sawtelle's very tasteful break in the Hot Rize recording, with crosspicking over the F chord. The lyrics of the verse require a measure of 2/4 time, which is included here in measure 31. A guitar break based on the chorus wasn't included in Hot Rize recording, so prior to Charles's break (beginning in measure 21) is a concoction of my own. Ditto for what follows measure 37, to round out the "verse" break. Hopefully, these additions are in keeping with the bluesy flavor of the piece.

What you'll hear on the audio CD for this issue is "Man in the Middle" demonstrated at a tempo which is compatible with the Northern Cross version. The basic melody tab is not demonstrated.

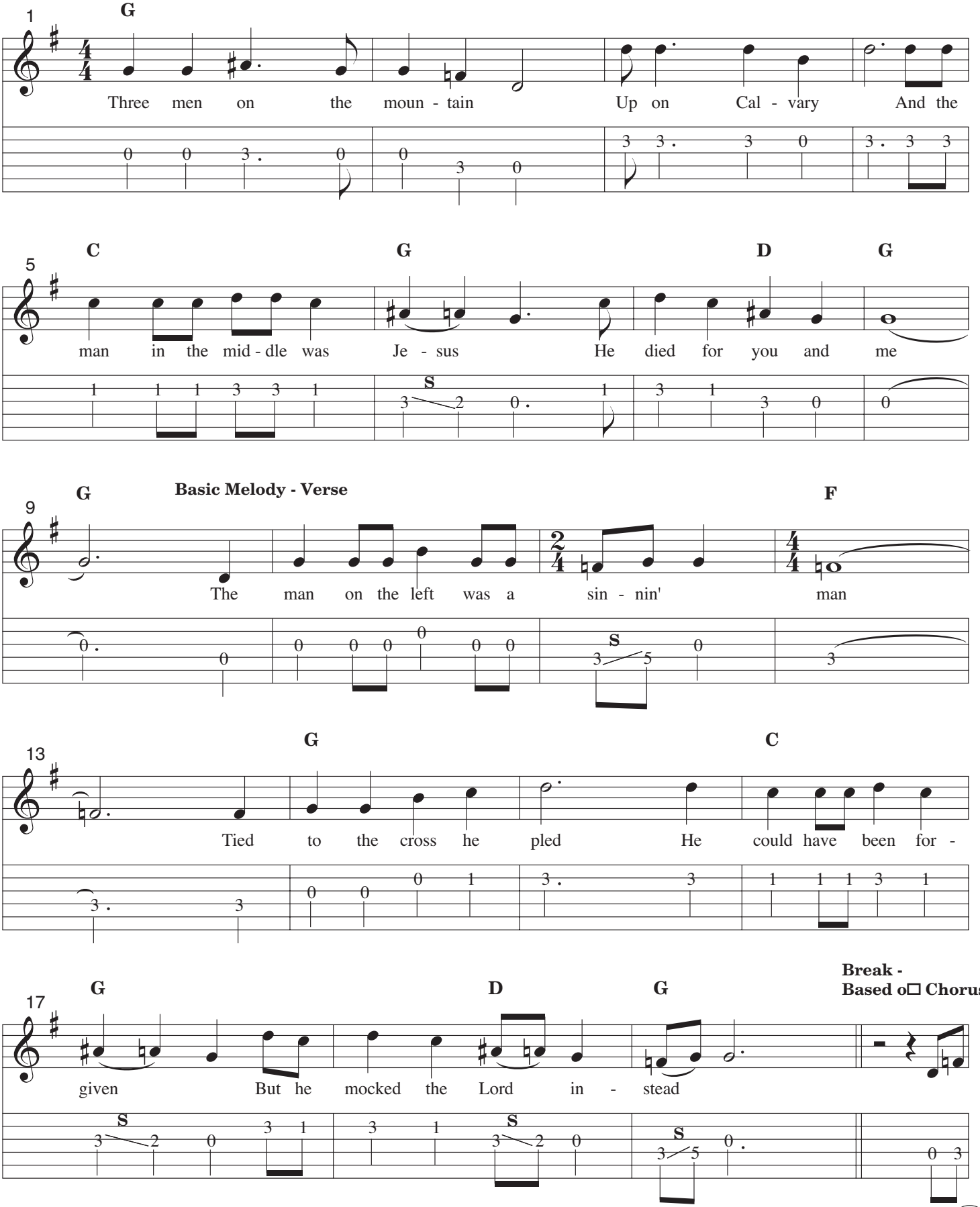
As always, ideas for songs in this column are most welcome. Just email them to: lewalt@icehouse.net. Don't forget to check in with us on www.lewalt.com once in a while to see what's new in the flatpicking department.

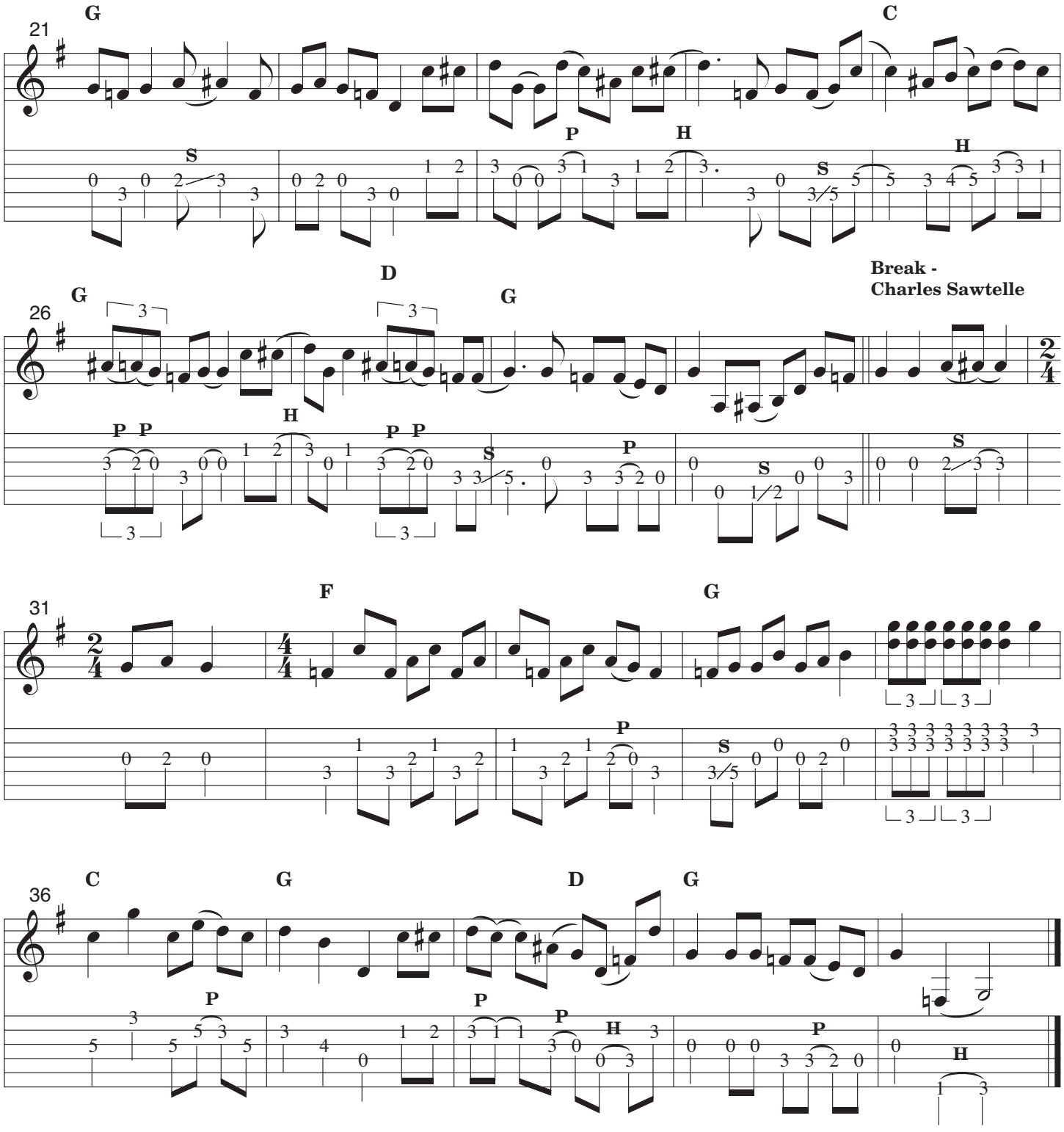


Audio CD
Tracks 47-48

Man in the Middle

Arranged by Harold Streeter

Basic Melody - Chorus

1
G
Three men on the moun - tain Up on Cal - vary And the
5
C G D G
man in the mid - dle was Je - sus He died for you and me
9
G
Basic Melody - Verse
F
The man on the left was a sin - nin' man
13
G C
Tied to the cross he pled He could have been for -
17
G D G
Break -
Based o Chorus
given But he mocked the Lord in - stead

Man in the Middle (con't)

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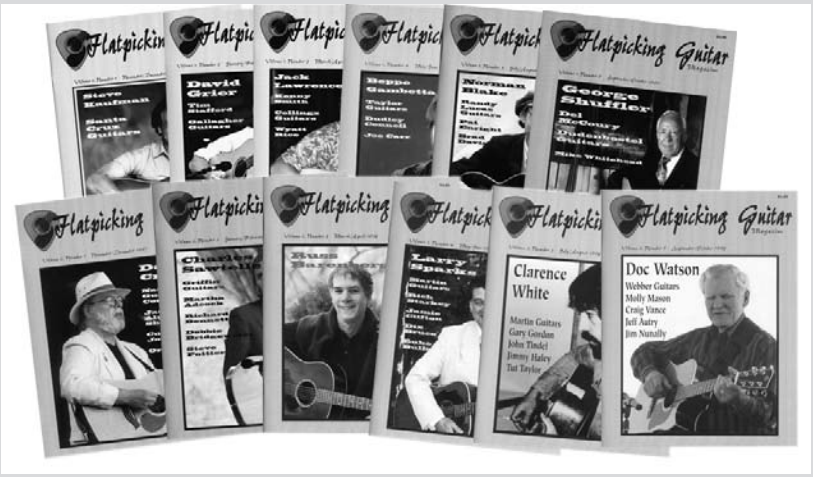
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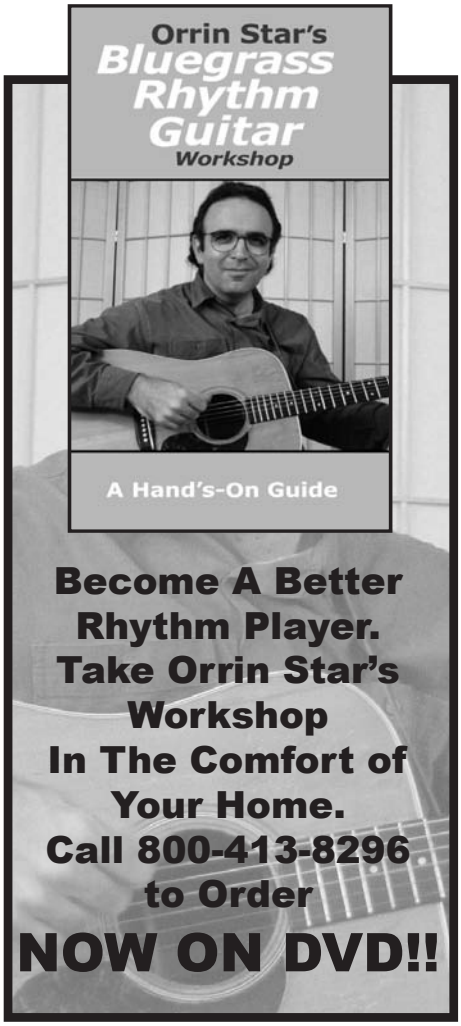

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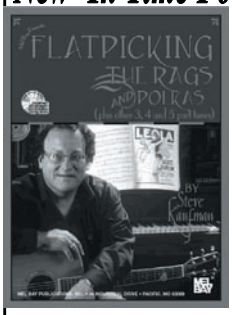

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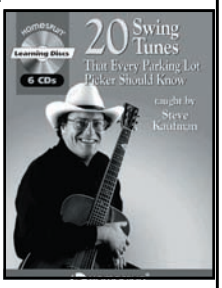

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Ode for Guitar

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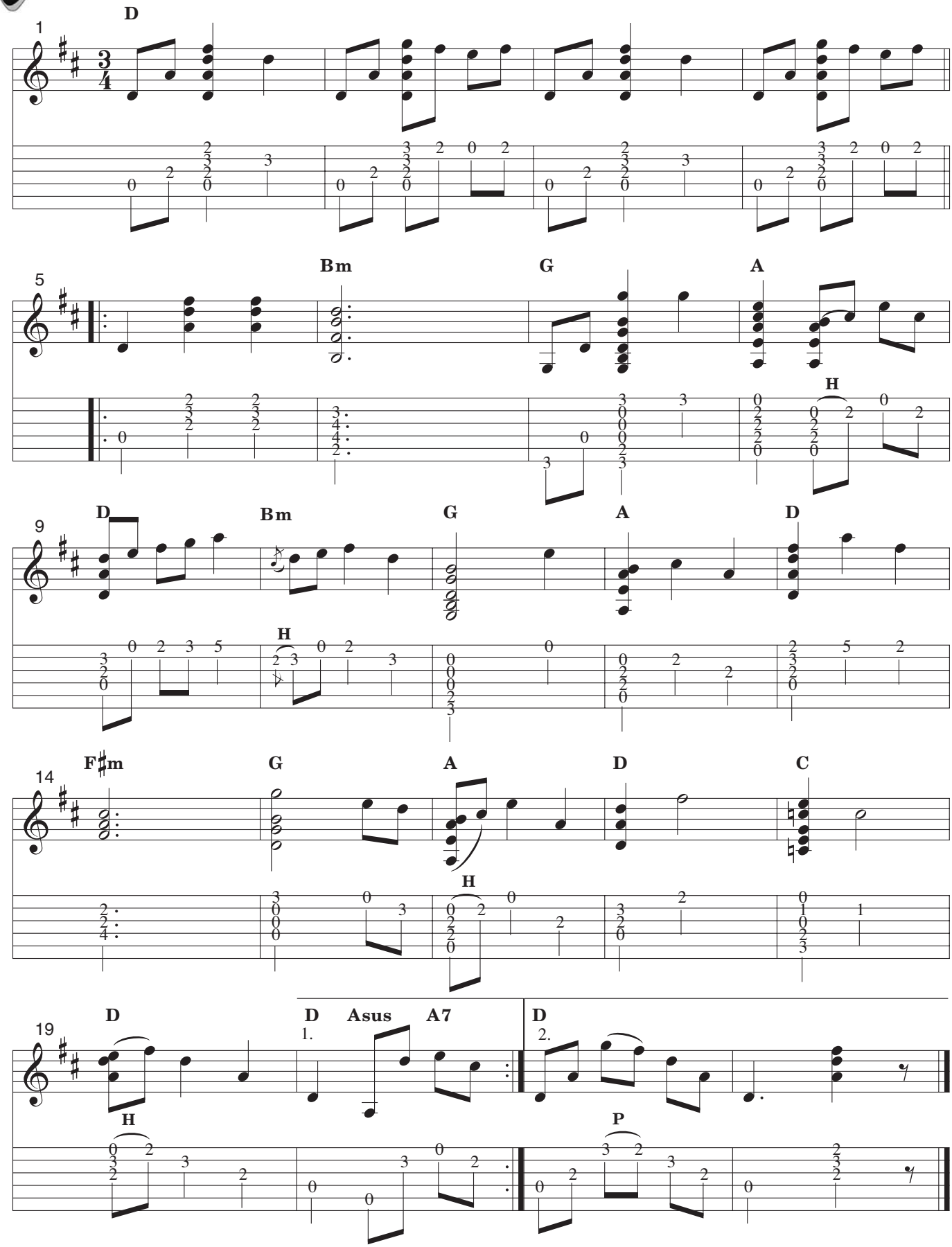
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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES
by Adam Granger

I've Got the Kitchen to Myself

Hi, pickers. This column starts with a paraphrased tip of the hat to David Grier's fabulous new album (what a great player—but don't get me started). The column, of course, has nothing at all to do with David, or with any of the tunes on his album, but our title here seemed both timely and appropriate to our subject matter—two good criteria for a title.

We have herewith two great Irish reels: *The New Copper Plate* and *The Old Copper Plate*. These tunes don't seem to be related beyond their Irish heritage, but titularly they invite medleyization, and that is what we've done here. I learned these tunes, along with aboout twenty-three gazillion others, from my old Powdermilk Biscuit Band-mate Bob Douglas. Since I'm planning to put this medley on my new flatpick album, *Solo Plectrum*, I called Bob up to see whether or not I had actually had an original thought. He said he didn't know of any recordings, but that he plays such a medley in jam sessions. I said, "Well, heck, Bob, I already swiped both of these tunes from you anyway. . ." Here, then is the medley and that's its story.

Let's have a brief discussion about the order of these tunes. I know that there are a lot of shrinks and shrink wannabes in flatpick land, and I'm sure you're already analyzing my choice of order for these tunes. "Why does he go from new to old?" "Should we append some negative vibe to this choice?" "Is the choice an allegory for life itself: we're born; we live; we die?" "Is he a 'glass-of-water-is-half-empty' kind of guy, with a gloomy and negative outlook on life?" "Should we maybe look into having the authorities take his son away for his own emotional well-being?"

READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

Well, I hate to shoot holes in all your fancy book-learnin', but the fact is that the medley actually just works better this way. We start in the key of G and then kick a step up into an A minor modal deal. Very strong and effective, as I hope the *FGM* CD recording demonstrates. All right. Enough psychobabble. On to the tunes!

The first thing you may notice about the *New Copper Plate* is that it appears to be a long dang tune. It is not, however, a long dang tune. (Long Dang Tune was the name of Chiang Kai Shek's chauffeur.) This is actually a normal, ("square") 32-bar tune. The reason it's not written with repeats (like *The Old Copper Plate*) is that the parts tag a little differently on their repeats (compare the last two measures of each part. See?) In standard music notation, this would be indicated by first and second endings, but the method of presentation here fits our tab format nicely.

The second thing to note about *The New Copper Plate* is that it is set entirely within the first five frets. As you play this tune, your left hand will be moving up and down one fret, using open strings and rests as "float points". For example, the first measure of the second part is played in the 2-5 fret position, and then, during the picking of the open string three notes into the second measure, the left hand moves down one fret to grab the ensuing first-fret note.

The Old Copper Plate starts out of an A minor chord, then floats upward, and then back downward, and so on. The second part gets a tad thornier, with some 3-5-7 interplay going on. We've had this little talk before, but let's have it again: When doing 3-5-7 business, one always has the option of shifting the notes upward to the 8th and 10th fret of the B string and the seventh fret of the high E string. This cinches in what is to some pickers an unwieldly five-fret reach. Drawbacks are that one has to zip one's left hand upward a half a foot and that—more significantly—notes intonate differently up the neck and have a different timbre. There's nothing wrong with this (otherwise no one would ever play up the neck!), but in a perfect world, the guitarist should be in charge of its occurrence. My advice is to give the 3-5-7 reach an honest try (throw in some chromatic scale work while you're at it!) and, if your left hand is still unable to make the reach, to then switch upstairs.

Okay, that's the scoop; everybody get to work.

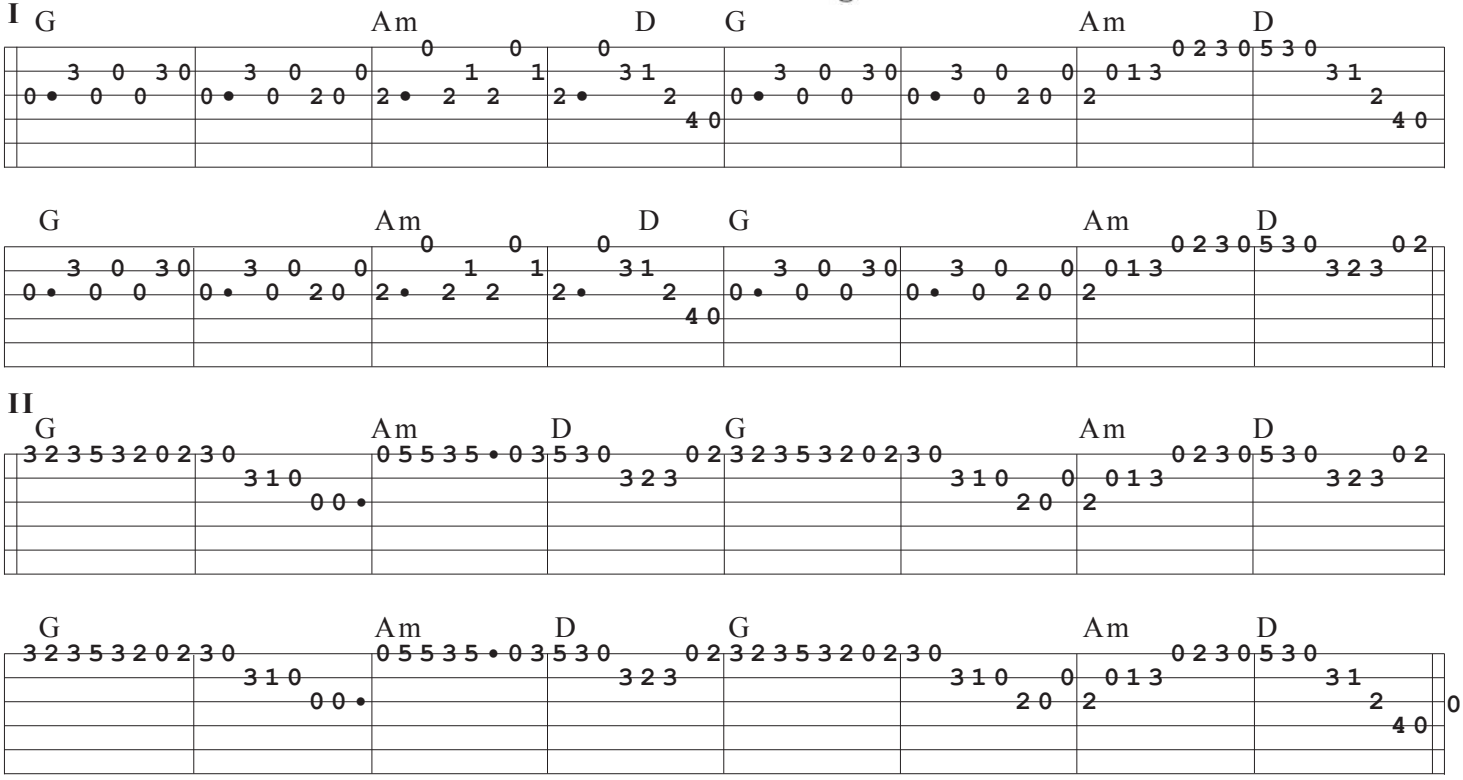
Adam will be teaching flatpick and rhythm guitar at Steve Kaufman's Kamp and Camp Bluegrass, in Levelland, Texas in the summer of 2004. He has taught at forty week-long camps over the past twenty-two years. Fortunately, Adam doesn't mind cafeteria food and dormitory accomodations.

Adam collects, among other things, Swiss Army Knives, watches, magazine first issues, flashlights, Cracker Jack prizes, Game Boy items and padlocks. He is bad at math but good at time management; he is a bad student but a good teacher; he likes cats but not dogs; he is equally good at listening and talking, and doesn't like movies in which kids die. He has sons named Austin and Ben, a wife named Renee and a cat named Milhouse.

THE NEW COPPER PLATE

Audio CD
Tracks 51

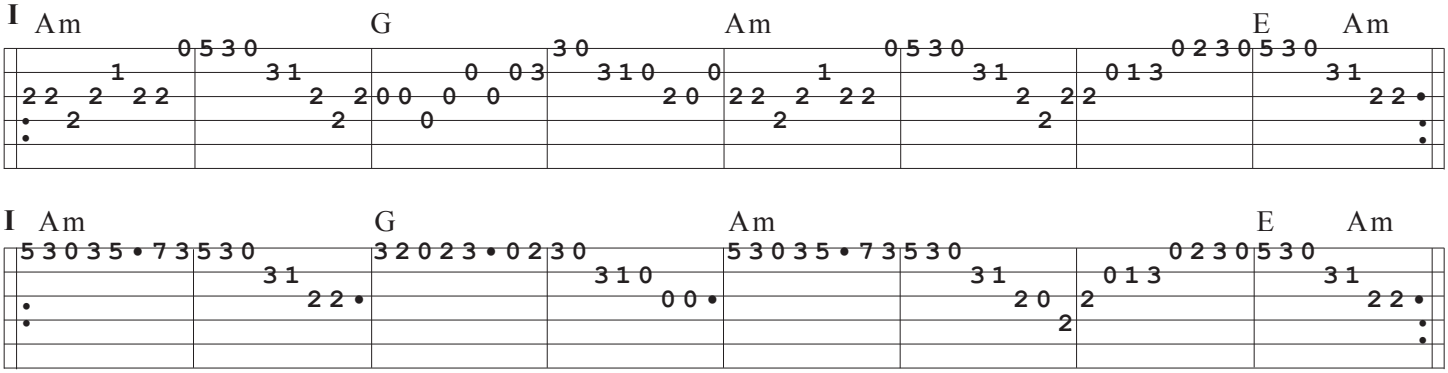
KEY: G



"What's with the single G note (and accompanying G chord) at the end of the tune?" I hear you ask (I'm getting better: last week I was hearing voices telling me to eat my right hand). The progressions for both parts of this tune end on the five chord, and that's a no-no in our music. I'm not playing the pedant here; the fact is that our psyches, our autonomous and central nervous systems, our *very essences* beg for, nay, **demand** resolution of a progression back to its one chord. Not to do so makes listeners irritable, anxious, tense and irregular.

THE OLD COPPER PLATE

KEY: Am



Having fun? In addition to the obvious mirth you are experiencing with these melodies, please do not neglect the entertainment value of the progressions. I implore you to go nuts. Remember, fiddle tune chord progressions are always up for discussion, never set in stone. This is even more true of these tunes, being Irish as they are: chordal accompaniment behind Irish tunes is a younger concept, and is much more malleable than many American styles. Please note that if you're playing rhythm with others, you will want them to be in the loop on any new changes, and to cheerfully assent to same.

Okay, that's it for this time, folks. Until the kitchen sinks, I remain your humble and obedient servant, who beseeches you to be kind to strangers (as long as they don't have weapons in their hands), to obey traffic laws, to wear clean underwear and, above all, to keep on pickin. . .

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

"Lady Be Good" and Jazz Soloing

You've had a chance to play the swing chords; now let's look at some soloing possibilities.

There is no law that says you can't play on swing tunes "like a flatpicker" (using a stream of eight notes); but what makes this style interesting (not to mention idiomatic) is that the phrasing is broken up with rests and syncopation. Why not honor the differences between musical styles? I try to play a little more like a singer or horn player would in a jazz context. That means "stop and breathe a little," and let some "daylight in between the notes."

The other kind of thinking I encourage is to get away from running scale notes up and down (although I do that at the end of the solo, more as a nod to the flatpicking idiom, for contrast, and maybe for a laugh!). You'll notice that any good jazz soloist, from Jethro Burns to Louis Armstrong to whoever your favorite is, plays lines that are more intervallic, playing leaps rather than always connecting to the next scale tone. This is where knowing your arpeggios will really help you.

A guide to basic jazz improvisation:

1) Know where you are in the form of the tune.
2) Know where the time is (the internal pulse).
3) Know what the chord of the moment is.
4) Know what chord tones are available to you.
5) Know what scale note choices work well with each chord.

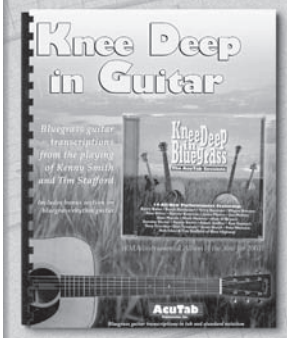
I also suggest knowing the melody of the tune you are playing!

By no means do you need to learn this solo as I play it note-for-note, but if you hear something you like, having it written out will help you see and figure out what it is that you heard. Once you get an idea that you like, try it out in different keys, different positions, and so on to build your own vocabulary of musical phrases.

I wrote the chord symbols in their basic form. You'll find places where I used chromatic notes, repeated riffs, references to the original melody, use of space, and development of various ideas. I won't analyze it all, but will leave it for you to figure out why I might have played a certain idea over a chord. Questions are always welcomed at www.johnmcgann.com

John McGann is currently recording and touring with The Wayfaring Strangers, Seamus Connolly and Joe Derrane, Rust Farm, and others. He's narrowed his musical choices as a player down to Bluegrass, fiddle tunes, Irish music, and jazz; on guitar, mandolin, octave mandolin and now pedal steel. He can also transcribe any music you'd like to learn. Check his website at www.johnmcgann.com for general tips for flatpickers.

Knee Deep In Guitar!



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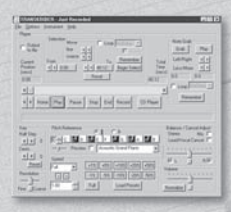

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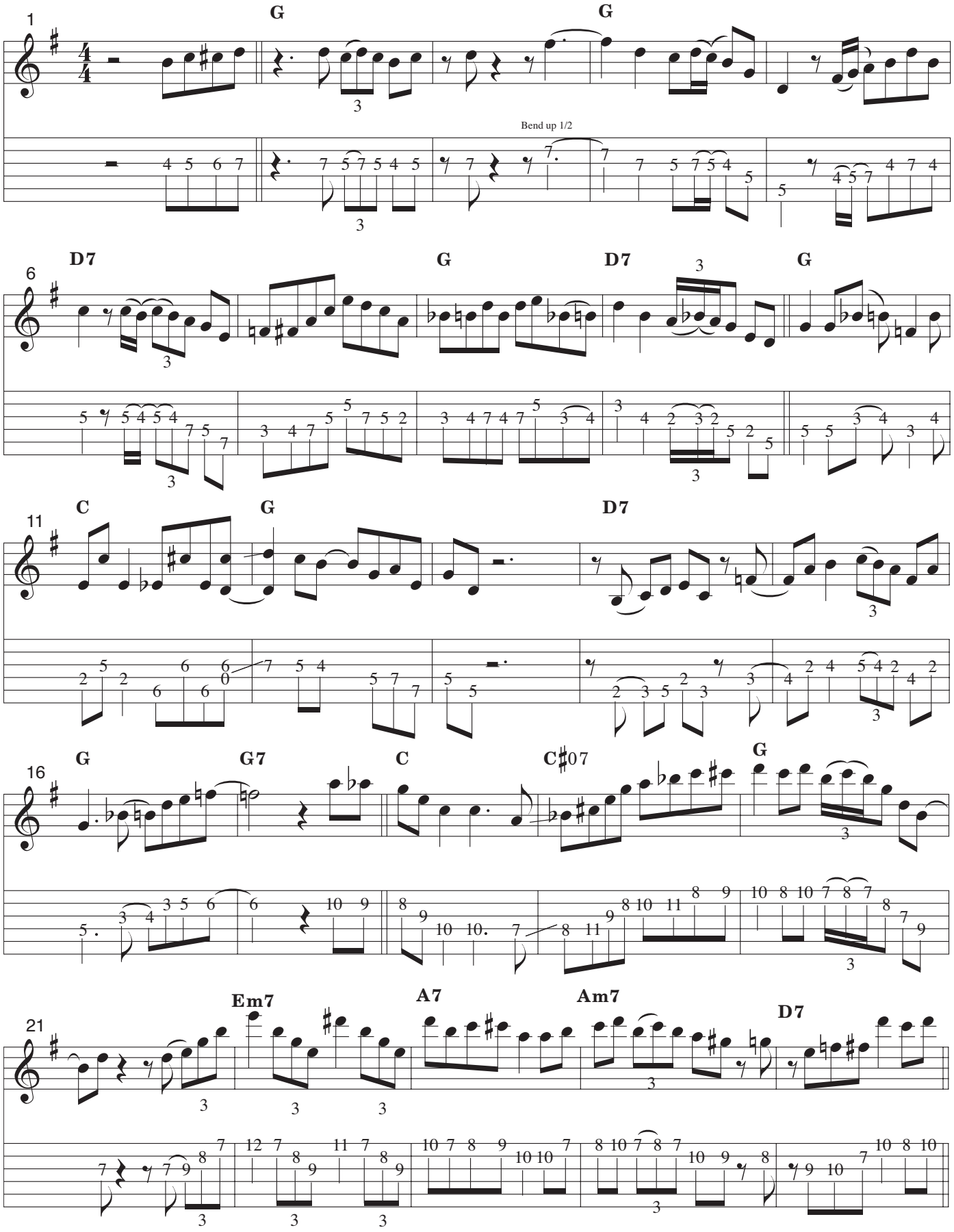
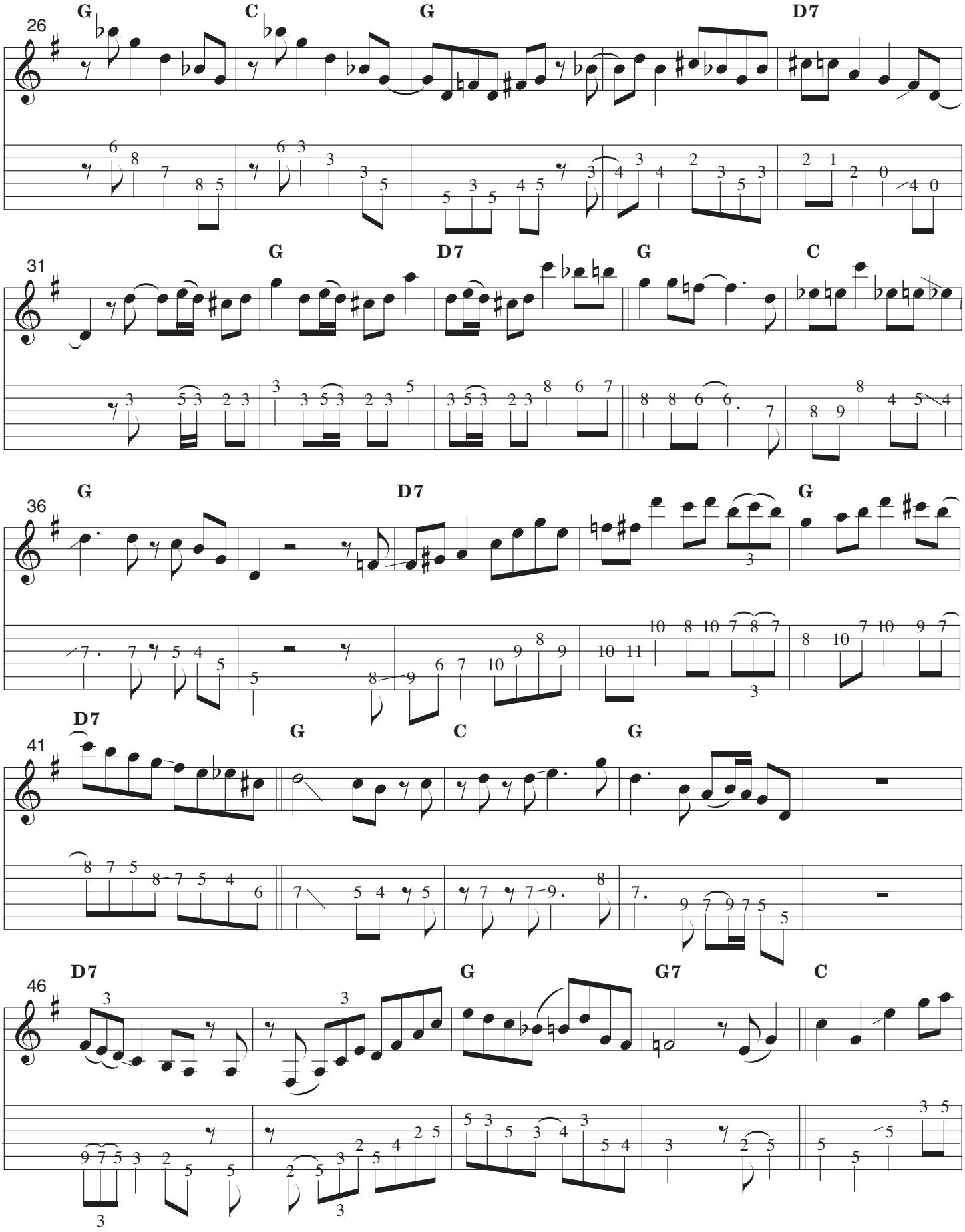
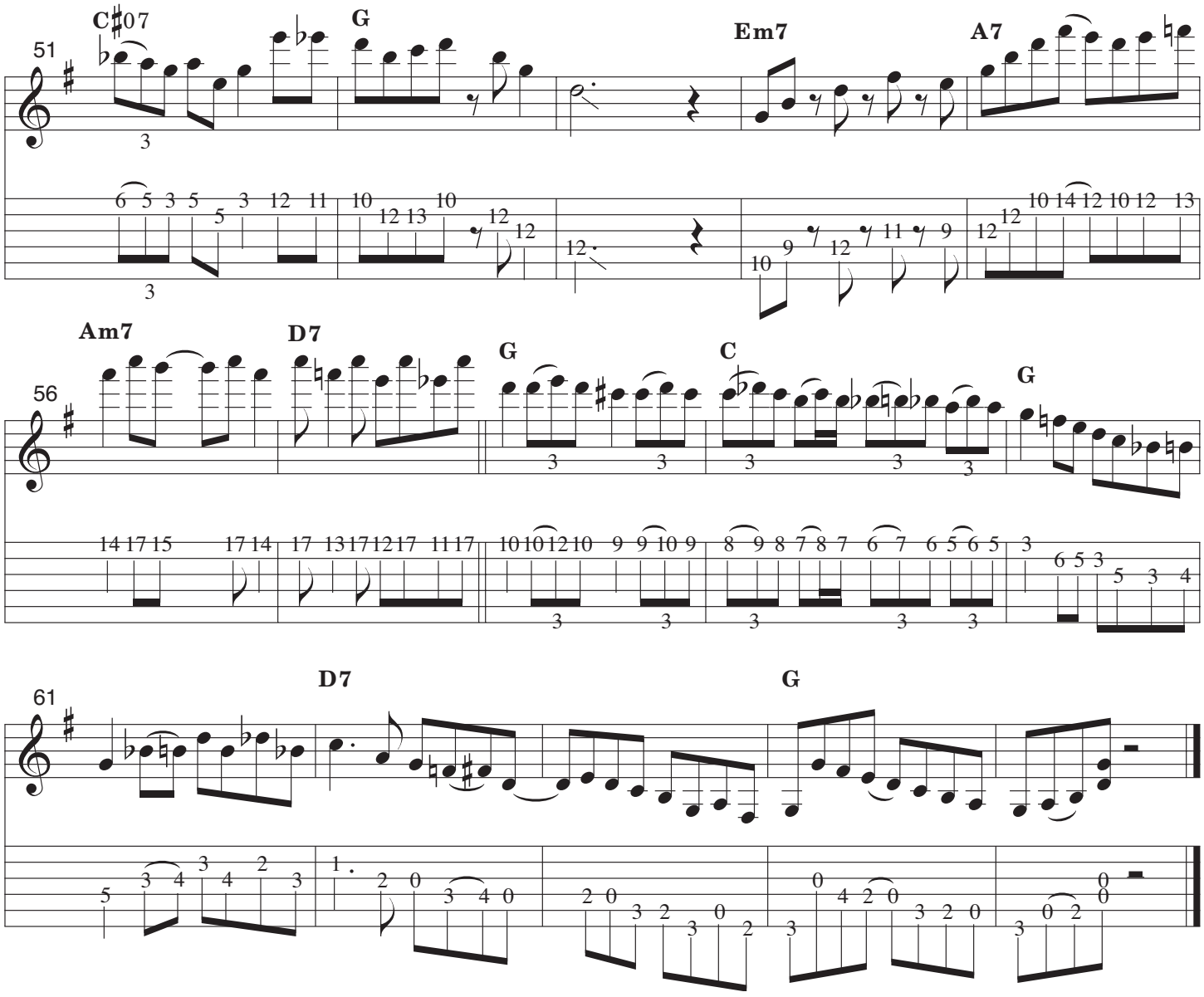
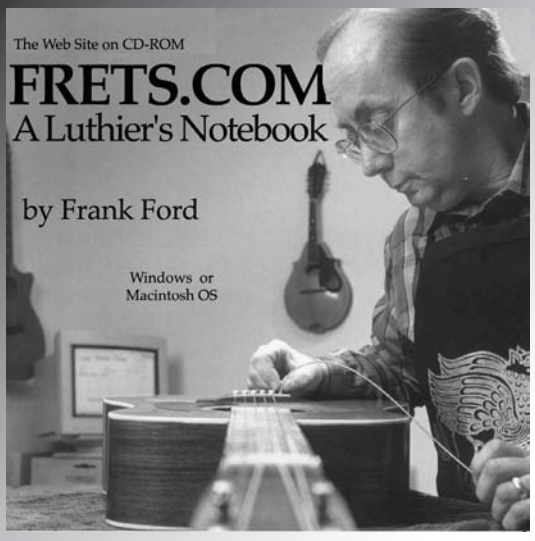
Audio CD
Tracks 52

Lady Be Good - Solo

Arranged by John McGann

Lady Be Good - Solo (con't)

Lady Be Good - Solo (con't)





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New Release Highlight
Van Hunter: The Border Brothers

by Van Hunter

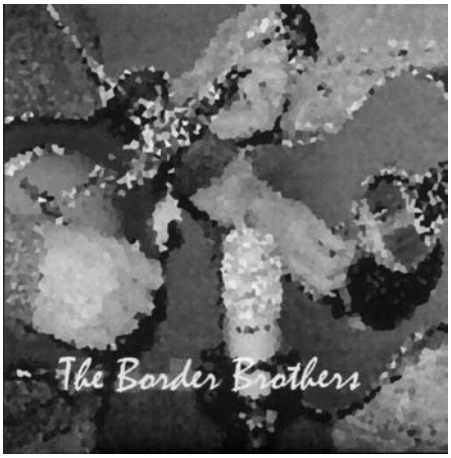
Editor's Note: For this issues' CD highlight we provide you with something a little different. Instead of reviewing the CD and highlighting the guitarist, we are going to let the guitarist tell you about the process of recording and producing his own CD from start to finish. Recording equipment is so affordable these days that many players are learning to become engineers as well. In this article Van Hunter, who is well known to anyone who attends Winfield or the Kaufman Camp, explains the process he went through in recording and producing his own record. By the way, the record is very good. The recording is clean, the playing is great, and the song selection is wonderful. To give you a taste we've included Van playing and singing "In the Jailhouse Now" on the audio CD and provided a transcription of his guitar solo.

So, you want to record yourself playing guitar…

WARNING! If you suffer from GAS (Guitar Acquisition Syndrome), do not get involved in recording. It is a bigger, darker, and deeper money pit than you can imagine. You will still call it GAS, only this time it will be Gear Acquisition Syndrome.

I say this with tongue-in-cheek, but there is a certain element of truth to it. The stuff that the big studios have is beyond what most people would ever want to spend. But the good news is there is very affordable equipment out there that can do things that couldn't be done a few years ago. The market is flooded with all this new audio gear. And it changes so quickly, you can hardly keep up with the "latest and greatest." The technology is here and the "times they are a-changin'." Home recording is part of a revolution in the industry. The tools are now available to anyone wishing to make their own professional recordings at home.

Notice I said "the tools" are available. The difficult part is the knowing exactly how to use them. In school we were trained to be writers and given a pen and a pencil or a typewriter. But in music classes no one taught us to record. To me recording should be a basic skill that all musicians learn. I think that recording oneself is one of the



better things you can do for your music. When you first listen to yourself you will more than likely be displeased. After you get over the initial shock you will begin to be able to critique yourself in ways you couldn't before. Recording yourself playing music is a very educational, satisfying, and rewarding experience. You will be a better player for doing it, even if your first efforts are not as good as you had hoped. With each successive session you will be forcing yourself to play in time, in tune and without mistakes. Of course you can edit your mistakes, but in the process you will learn to play it the way you know you should.

A few months back I finished my first CD with my music partner Bob Gray (we call ourselves "The Border Brothers"). I have written this article to share my experiences with the process so that you can go into it with your eyes open. Trust me, there is much more to it than you think.

A little over three years ago, I walked into the Grandma's music store and bought a couple of nice microphones (Neuman KM-184 and an AKG Solid Tube), a digital audio workshop (or DAW, specifically a Roland VS-1880), a CD burner, and a pair of monitor speakers (Roland DS-90) and set out to record my first CD. I thought it might take me about three months to do this, as I would need time to read the manual and get a few practice sessions under my belt. But I assumed it would take no longer than six months max. In the end it took me three years to complete the project!.

For the first few months I stumbled around reading the manual and trying to get the sound out of my guitar like you hear on some of Doc's early albums when he was playing his Martin or the sound that John Carlini and Tony Rice got on *River Suite*. Realizing I was in over my head. I bought David Moulton's book *Total Recording*. This helped me to get thinking in the right direction.

When Bob and I first started recording, we thought we would record together and play the tunes straight through. But we quickly learned that you have to do that without any mistakes because we didn't have total sonic isolation from each other. Editing became a nightmare. So we started laying down each part on a separate track. This is called "overdubbing." Les Paul was the first guy to do this in his garage studio with the tune "How High the Moon." When we stared overdubbing things started to come together and correcting mistakes was much easier. And as an added bonus I had more tonal control over each instrument. Once we had all the tracks down for a tune the hard part came for me. I literally sat up for hours upon hours, late into the night, mixing each tune into stereo tracks. This is called "mixing down," and it's the creative part for the engineer. This is where all the parts on all the tracks are put onto two tracks, one on the right and the other is the left. This process is what makes the CD sound the way it is going to sound. Once I had that done, I would burn that one tune to a CD and go out and hear it on as many different systems that I could find. And more often than not Bob or I would hear something that didn't sound quite right. So it was back to the drawing board.

At some point I would reach a level of frustration where the only thing to do was to take a break from it all. This was a good thing because when I returned to it I felt like I was listening in a new way with fresh ears. At some point we just had to say it was good enough, which is what most musicians do when working on their own projects. During the earlier stages of the recording, I had become very dissatisfied with the sound and bought a mic preamp (ART DI/O). This helped clean up the sound because I was bypassing the mic preamps on the Roland, which were a little noisy. We re-recorded some stuff and also recorded new material.

All the while I was mixing down and we were critiquing our work. Bob had recorded before with another group and had definite ideas about what sounded good to him. As painful as it can be, it is essential to have other people listen and critique your work.

After many stops and starts, the day finally came to declare the project complete. Actually, that happened a couple of times until finally it just had to stop.

Now came the big decision of whether or not to have the project mastered by someone else. This is expensive. Mastering is the process in which a mastering engineer balances all the levels of each tune, determines the time between each song on the project and makes whatever adjustments are necessary. Some of these guys even perform magic rituals during the process and end up making your CD sound wonderful! In the recording industry, mastering is an art unto itself. In the end I decided to do it myself, since I figured I would have difficulty recouping the money it would require to pay someone else to do it. Besides I learned a lot.

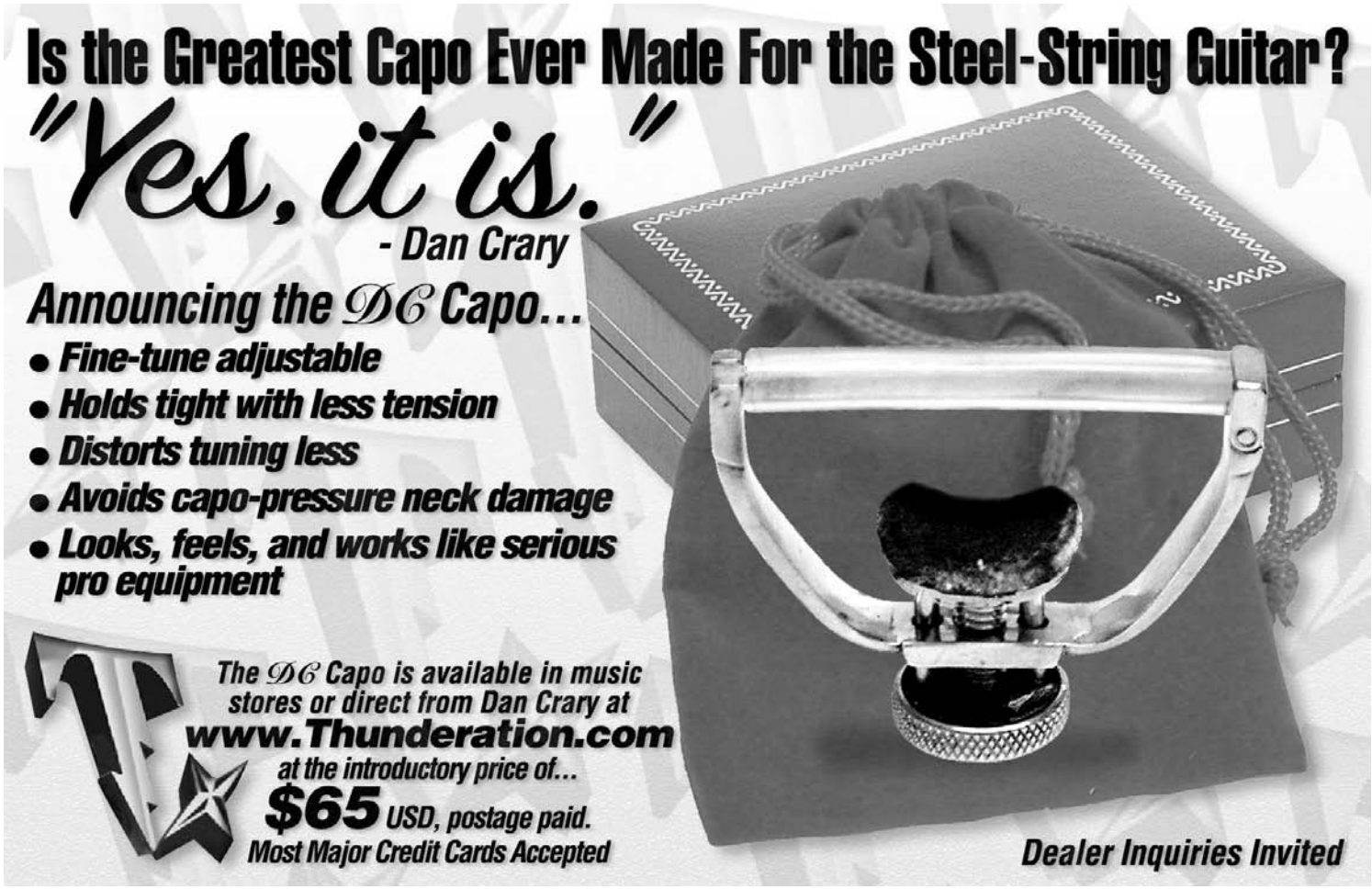
Then came the artwork for the cover and the disc. Well I ended up doing that myself as well. A lot of things are possible with the use of computers.

As you've been reading, the thought may have crossed your mind: why not just spend all this time and energy practicing and then at some point just go to a studio and have someone else do all the work? This is a very valid point and one you should consider. A reputable studio will do a better job than you can do on your own, at least in the beginning. It is a difficult task to be the artist, the engineer and the producer. But people are doing it. Todd Phillips engineered and produced *Phillips Grier and Flinner* with David Grier and Matt Flinner, recording it in his dining room on a Roland VS-1680. Tony Rice and John Carlini recorded *River Suite* on a reel-to-reel recorder in Tony's living room. Listen to the sound quality on those recordings and you will hear that they got excellent results.

What will it cost, you ask? Well that depends on what you already have and how much you want to spend. But to pull out some rough figures I would say somewhere between $1500 and $5000 will get you going. If you know what you want, you can get some excellent equipment deals on eBay. If you decide you don't want to produce a CD, but just want to record some demos of your playing then you can get by very reasonably. The thing to do is visit your local pro-audio shop and find someone there you can trust. Tell them what you want to do and they should steer you in the right direction.

In doing this project I have learned much more than I had expected. If you think you have the time and the inclination to get into this, then by all means, take the plunge.

But be advised the biggest ingredients to completing a project are your passion and desire to just do it. There are many CDs that never get finished (that's where the equipment on eBay and at your local music store comes from). Be sure you have the time to learn how to do this. If you are uncertain, then pick up a minidisc recorder and put the mic eight inches in front of the 16th fret and record away. You won't be able to edit but you will at least know what you played. And besides, you never know who might want to listen to it.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Audio CD
Track 54

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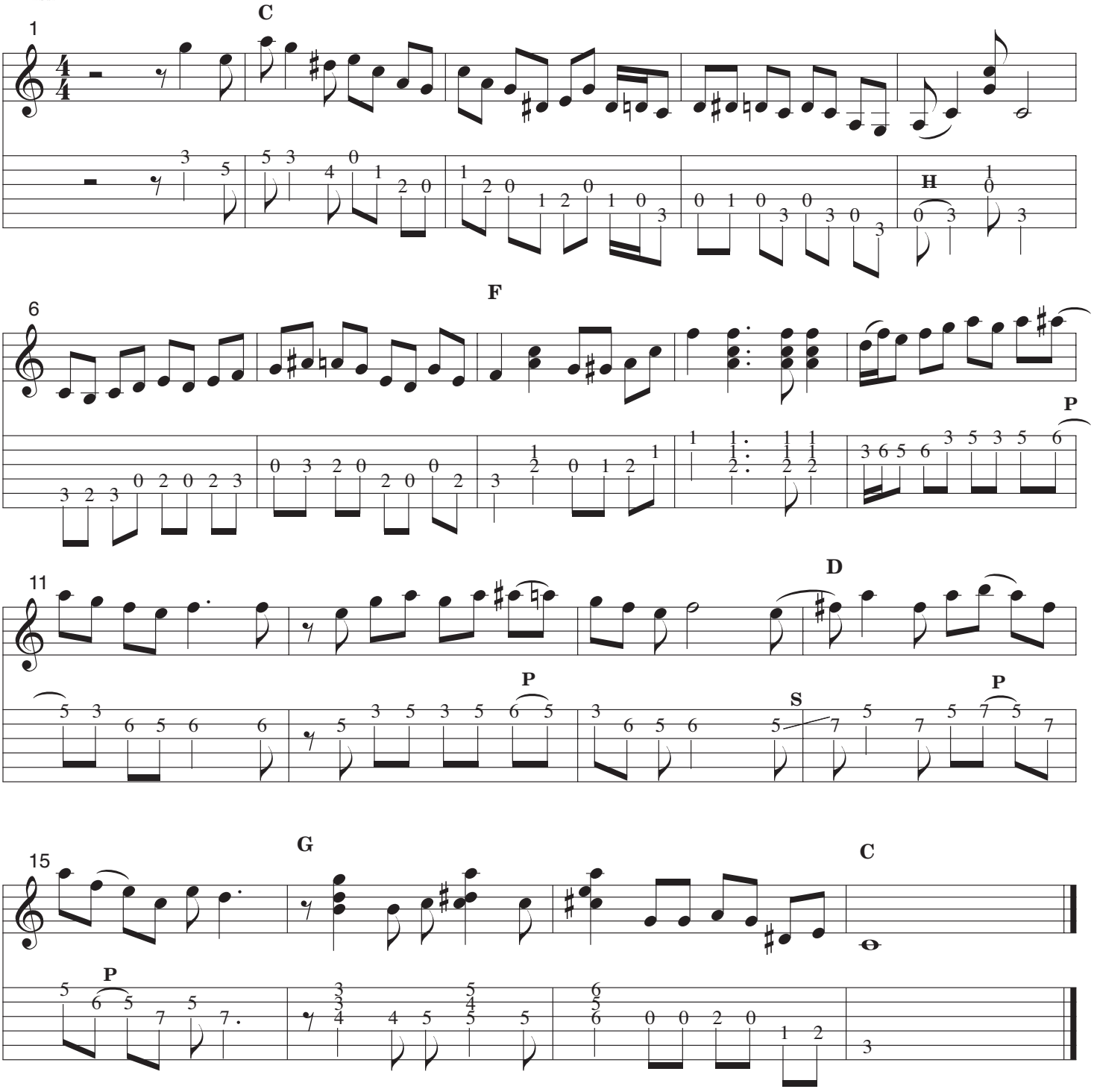
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Reviews

Canyoneers
Chris Brashear &
Peter McLaughlin
Copper Creek Records
CCCD-0222

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

To even the most casual listener, it seems we're in a second "Golden Age of Acoustic Brother-Style Duets," just as we're in a second golden age of luthiery. Perhaps (as Dr. Phil might suggest) it's a desire to return to simpler values and a clearer connection with our feelings. Regardless, I've seen more and more CDs surfacing that match excellent duet vocals with excellent music. Canyoneers is no exception to that trend.

Chris Brashear and Peter McLaughlin are both members of the bluegrass band Perfect Strangers, but they've also been performing as a duet since 1992, and that decade of experience coalesces with subtle perfection on Canyoneers. But to say "oh, another brothers-style recording" does no justice to the level of musicianship Brashear and McLaughlin exhibit. There's some wonderfully understated backup rhythm work occurring on almost every cut from both Chris and Peter, and an amazing level of secondary lead work underneath the solos. You only get that level of "psychic synchronization" when musicians spend lots of time playing together and listening carefully to each other.

In terms of the CD's content, Brashear and McLaughlin have sprinkled in two classic Delmore brother tunes, three instrumentals (one each written by Brashear and McLaughlin and one penned by Clayton McMichen), and a series of ballads about betrayal and murder, taking leave, places lost, prison regrets, and the last roundup. Chris Brashear's talent as an evocative lyricist is evidenced twice, with two wistful ballads. There's a lot of music happening in 41 minutes!

But what I appreciated most—and what enabled me to listen again and again to this CD—was the remarkable vocal and instrumental musical interplay. From the first cut ("Sad Parting") you are aware of two musicians listening intently to each other. Listen (on headphones, if you can) to the rhythm guitar work on "Sad Parting." Note how the two guitars support each other and how the lead continually emerges from and then subsides effortlessly into the blend. All the time, there's plenty of room for the vocals. I get the impression of a delicious acoustic transparency: everything is present, yet you've got "room" to see it all without clutter. Not only do I want to see these guys play (to see if they can actually perform live

And it just keeps getting better. The introduction for the title cut "Canyoneers" (a tale of heroic endeavors with reckless abandon for life and limb) anticipates the lyrics: a simple lead against the swell of the rhythm (and note the subtle touch of the bass hammer-on). Superb! "Lost Canyon," with accompanying fiddle by Brashear, expresses a yearning for something wonderful now irretrievably lost. Progress now to "Little Gibson March," the first of three great instrumentals. Listen carefully to the openings for "Open Pit Mine" and "The Old Prison Bars": each concisely captures the tone and mood of the lyrics to follow. This is amazing musicianship that demands repeated listening!

Essentially, there was not a cut on the CD that did not provide me with the desire to pick up my own guitar and learn something I heard.

Additionally, this CD touches topically on something else. In this early portion of the 21st century, modern listeners may have challenges connecting with the late 19th and early 20th century images and references that run through the canon of bluegrass/acoustic music.

As you listen to this CD, you'll notice an absence of some familiar musical images but a presence of others. You might just chalk that up to the fact that Brashear and McLaughlin live out West, but to quote from the excellent CD liner notes from Ron Thomason (himself an avowed canyoneer): …neither the music nor the culture from which it sprang exists any more. Therefore, [the music] has to exist some other where from lonesome cabin homes, unfaithful lost loves, justified lawlessness, and gap-toothed banjo players…Chris and Peter [are] creating lyrics and tunes which present the music in the context of the wild (in the conservation sense) west; that is, rivers, canyons, isolated country folks, mining, cowboys, and the clingingly strong emotions of the plains and mountain folks… Good artists paint with the materials at hand and reflect the . Great artists take the materials at hand and give fresh expression to universal themes of the human condition (unfaithful love, fear, regret, and parting).

Finally, I'd like remark on the wonderfully sparse and clean design of the CD liner notes, as well as the aforementioned text by Ron Thomason. It's not often you encounter liner notes with both an allusion to F. Scott Fitzgerald and a quote from Robert Frost within the span of eight paragraphs, especially for acoustic musicians. Inspiring? Definitely. Give this CD several focused listenings, and if you're any sort of guitarist, you will find something you want to add to your repertoire.

Song List: Sad Parting, The Canyoneers, Lost Canyon, Little Gibson March, Open Pit Mine, The Old Prison Bars, McMichen's Reel, Remember, I Feel Lonesome Too, Sad Woman from the Country, Brittlebrush, Someday You'll Pay, Round Up Time in Heaven

Tony Rice: 58957:
The Bluegrass Guitar Collection
Rounder Records 1116-1162202

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

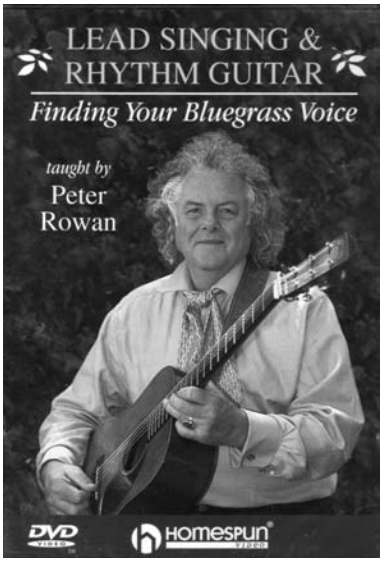
Let's see: at last count on his website, Tony has 34 albums on the Rounder label. If Rounder continues to pick individual songs from each of those albums and create new compilations, we should have a new Tony Rice album every other year for the next 30 or 40 years. While I'm as excited about a TR offering as the next guitarist, I already have most of the albums from which these tunes have been drawn. And I've already created my own "Best of TR" CD. Granted, my "Best of" doesn't have nice CD liner notes with an essay by Ron Block, tune-by-tune notes from Tony, or even a little historical run-down of 58957 (the serial number for the Tony Rice/Clarence White D-28).

But on the other hand, if you've only recently been introduced to the work of Tony Rice, this is a great introductory collection to purchase. You'll hear TR in various ensemble band settings (including my personal favorite, the Blake & Rice duo) and get a great overall view of the talents of one of the great acoustic musicians of our time. In fact, this CD paired with Tony Rice Plays and Sings Bluegrass (Rounder CD 0253) pretty much provides your "Tony Rice 101" coursework.

Song List: Tipper; Monroe's Hornpipe; Jerusalem Ridge; New Chance Blues; Blackberry Blossom; Medley: Fiddler's Dram/Whiskey Before Breakfast; Whitewater; Lost Indian; Stoney Point; Misty Morning; Gold Rush; Foggy Mountain Rock; Stoney Creek; Home Sweet Home; Bill Cheatham; Stoney Lonesome; Soldier's Joy; Cheyenne; Big Mon; Birdland Breakdown; Port Tobacco

DVD Review

Lead Singing and
Rhythm Guitar—
Finding Your Bluegrass Voice
by Peter Rowan
Homespun Video
DVD-ROW-VC21



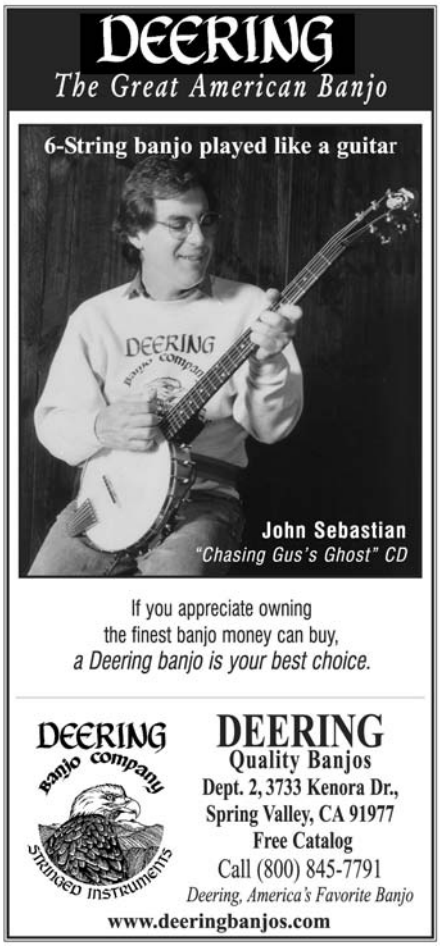
Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

This is an unusual lesson from Homespun. Instead of focusing on just lead singing or just rhythm guitar, it puts the two together into a "style." It's a good approach and a nice variation and addition to the other Homespun lessons. Peter Rowan, of course, is just the man to give this lesson, being a well-rounded player and extraordinary singer with qualifications across the spectrum of bluegrass, rock, and newgrass. And, in spite of the title, there's also a fair amount of lead guitar presented here.

Rowan uses the songs "Blue Moon of Kentucky,, "Walls of Time," "Wayfaring Stranger," "In The Pines," and "Knocking At Your Door" to illustrate concepts of breath control, phrasing, note choice and inflection, and other important topics. I picked up quite a few little tips here and there that helped me move from being a Bob Dylan-type singer to more of a John Prine-type vocalist. If your vocal ability is greater than mine (and how can it not be?), you'll probably get a lot out of Rowan's tips. I did learn quite a bit about the voice, even if I'll never be able to apply it in this lifetime.

Guitar is another matter. I can make a G-chord with the best of them and watching Rowan play rhythm with his singing was very instructional. He discusses how to best accompany the voice with the guitar, and illustrates several options for each song. He discusses and shows bass runs, bluesy licks, rest strokes, and more. Each song is chosen for a specific purpose, from straight bluegrass to waltz to bluesy. You'll get quite a few tips on rhythm guitar. Sometimes the best tips are the ones you pick up just by watching, so pay attention! And finally, Rowan plays some "simple" leads for a few of the songs. I say simple because they're not fingerbusters, but getting the kind of tone and feeling that Rowan gets is anything but simple. Again, pay attention to the nuances.

Interspersed with the lessons are some of Rowan's recollections of playing with Bill Monroe. It's just no use arguing bluegrass with a man who starts demonstrations with "Now sometimes Bill would play it like this and sometimes he'd play it like this. It just depends on how he felt that night." All in all, I found Lead Singing and Rhythm Guitar to be a very instructional lesson, all 90 minutes worth, and a very worthy addition to my musical lesson library.



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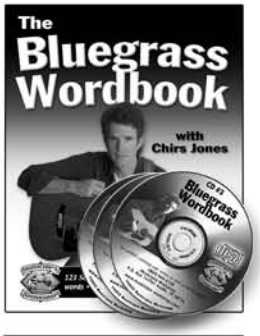

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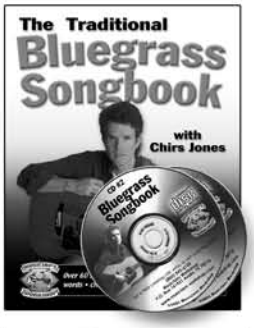

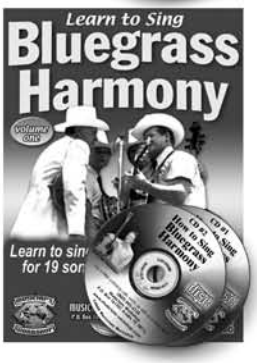

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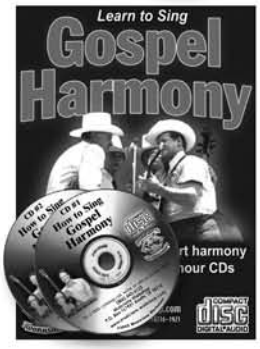

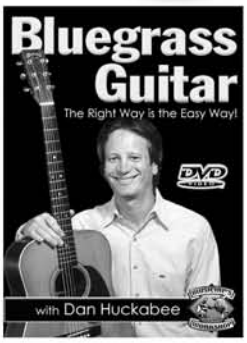

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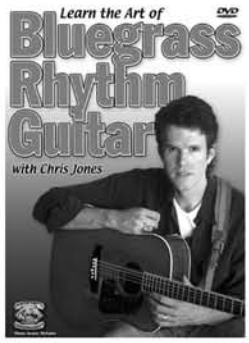

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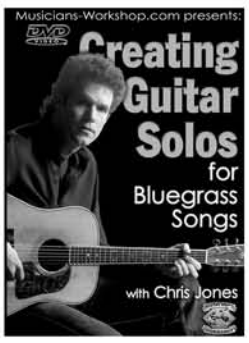

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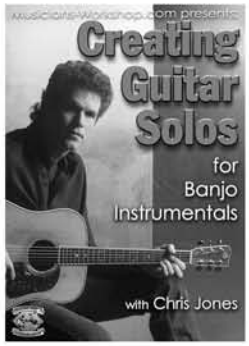

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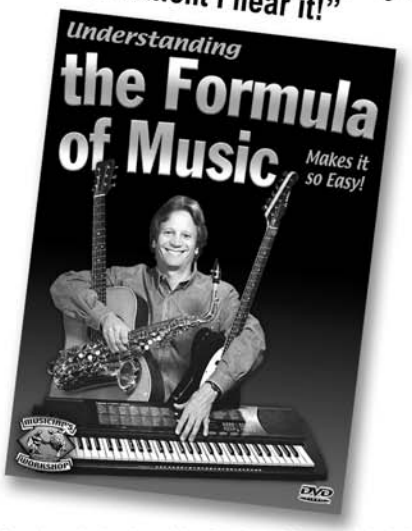

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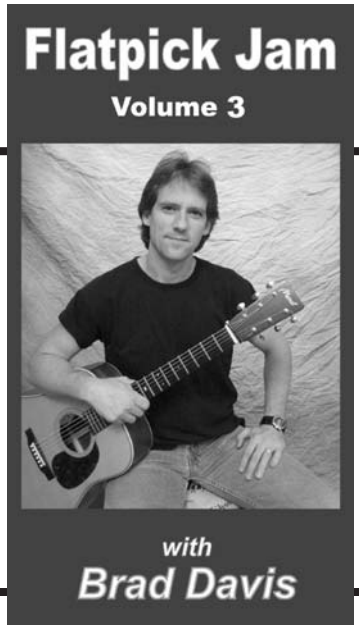

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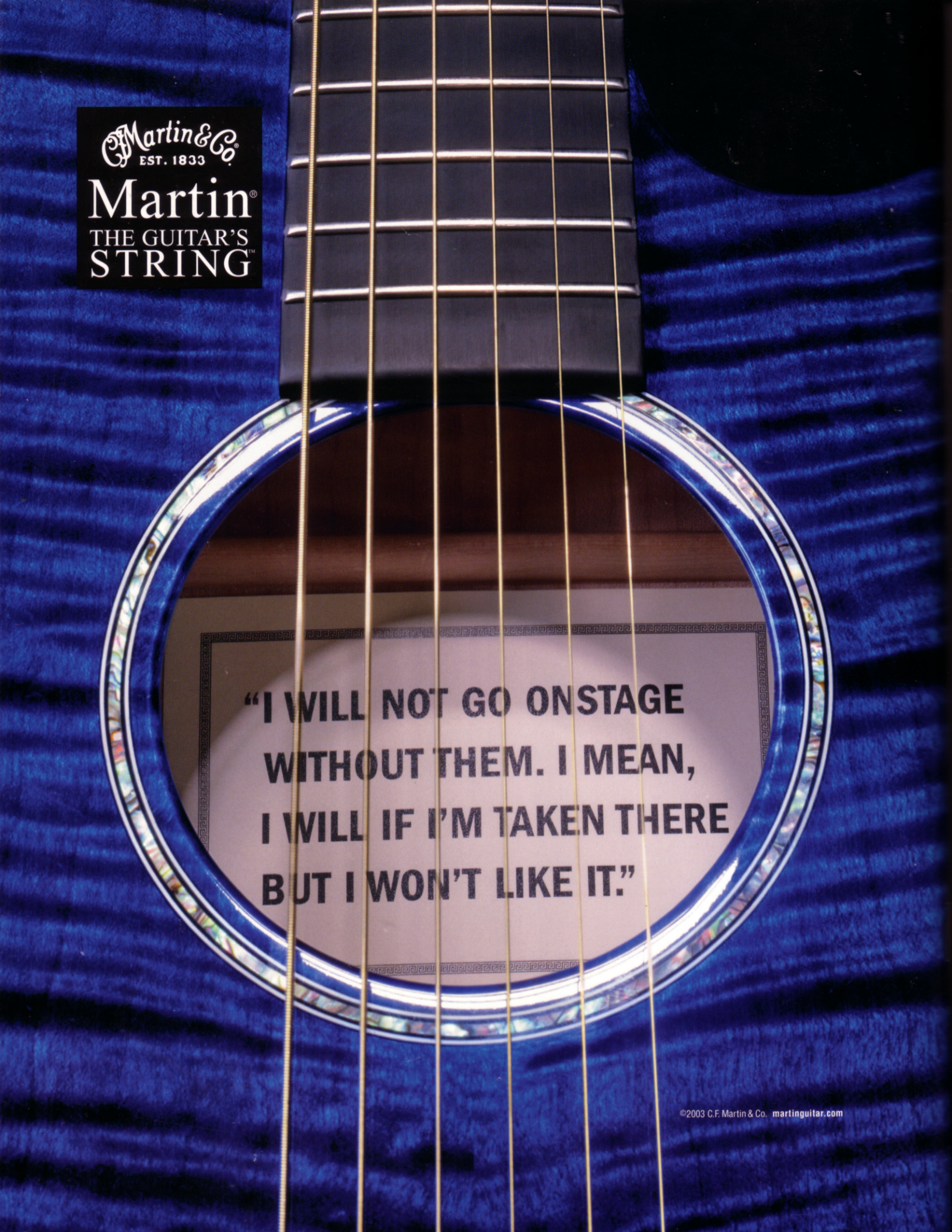
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